

Parish of Great Chesham: Moving Forward Together in Prayer

Dear friends across the Parish,

It usually takes a few weeks of a clergy vacancy for it to sink in that the vicar is not coming back from their holiday! We are in a time of transition, but not a period of passivity, for we trust in a great God and a loving Saviour. Those who were able to come to the wonderful evening of prayer and encouragement, led by Matt Searles, will have been reminded that every member of the church is called to works of service, in order to build up the body of Christ in unity and to maturity (Eph 4). There is much ministry to get on with now as we serve one another and seek to reach our town with the love of Christ, and so we won't want to just watch and wait until a new Team Rector & Vicar arrives.

As a staff team, we miss the leadership of Simon and we miss Sylvester's big smile, but though they leave big holes, we are in good heart, and continue to meet together to study God's Word on a Monday morning and encourage each other. I'm away for a few weeks convalescing, during which Josh Bailey will have pastoral responsibility, together with the vast wisdom and experience in the lay and ordained Parish staff team, and support from the deanery if needed. Christ Church and St Georges will be especially feeling the stretch of the vacancy now, and we appreciate their patience and grace in accepting changes to their service patterns, and are praying for the appointment of an interim minister.

The Team Rector appointment process continues, led by the Parish wardens. Last Monday evening, the PCC held a section 11 meeting at which the Parish profile and statement of needs were discussed, and some lay members of the selection panel approved. There will be a Section 12 meeting on December 2nd, at which the patron and bishop will be present. We hope to advertise on January 7th with interviews on March 4th. If you have any questions or concerns about the process, please contact Stuart Stockdale (stuartstockdale@live.com).

As we advertise in the New Year, we must continue to prioritise prayer and so alongside our district prayer meetings, another Parish wide evening has been planned for 16th January, led again by Matt. Do put the date in your diary. We are 7 churches in one Parish, and so as we approach the Advent season, it would be great to pray for one another. The rest of this leaflet contains news and prayer points from each church for your interest and intercession...

With love in Christ,
John Shepherd

Christ Church

In August Sylvester left us, taking up a position in Sweden. Gratefully since then we've been well supported by the parish team. It's been wonderful enjoying such variety. We've even been found ministers to officiate at Christmas midnight and morning services. Numbers attending morning services have held up and grown at Church @ 5 under the care of Estelle, our LLM in training. In summer we enjoyed cream teas in church and a picnic at Bullscroft farm. We had a great feast at Harvest Festival "Big Breakfast". Numbers at Messy Church have been disappointing so we're trying a new format called "Play and Praise" though this too is struggling. Our occasional Friday "Praise and Worship" evenings have a faithful following and it's been good to see Sally and Hamad Bailey in the line-up. **Please Pray for:** the search for an interim team vicar; for church wardens Stephen and Chris, Estelle and others keeping the ball rolling; for our children's outreach that we might find the right vehicle; Christmas services including the Advent Service of Light, and carols with the Waterside Community Choir.

Emmanuel Church

Emmanuel brought their morning congregations back together in the Spring, which has been encouraging, but also fills the space on a Sunday morning and provides a challenge for future growth. Messy Church restarted on a monthly basis after Easter and has been attracting some local families. The vicar's bike accident at the beginning of the Summer has meant that Andrew and others have taken on extra responsibilities. We enjoyed hosting a joint men's breakfast with St Mary's, where Steve Gaukroger shared the gospel. Our home groups were reshuffled this Autumn, with new relationships being established, as we study the gospel of grace in Galatians. We enjoyed an excellent day away with Hope and Emmanuel Churches together in October, being wonderfully reminded that as Christians we are joined to Jesus. **Please Pray for:** John's recovery and energy for a stretched team; Bible teaching workshop open to all on Nov 23rd with Matt Searles; Christmas flyers going through all the doors in the district; our Christmas events and services through December.

Hope Church

Six months have passed since our official launch as Hope Church and there's so much to give thanks for. In God's goodness we now regularly have around 45-50 adults worshipping on a Sunday morning and between 15-20 children in our Sunday school, which presents a challenge in terms of needing additional leaders and helpers. We're building a good relationship with Ivingswood school and hope to be able to restart a Bible club there soon. We've started a monthly men's breakfast and a number of new home groups, including a daytime women's Bible study group and an evening discipleship group. New people join us regularly but we're currently thinking and praying about our vision and strategy to be more proactive in reaching out with the good news into Hivings and Pond Park. **Please pray for** Clarity of vision and wise use of limited resources; that we'll make the most of our first Christmas as we invite local people to our various services; the possibility of trialling 'Hope Café' next year.

St George's

We said our fond farewells to Sylvester and his family soon after our Fun Day in July. In the period since then we have continued our services, fellowship, learning and outreach activities as usual. We have retained, and probably strengthened our bonds with our sister Church in Waterside, Christ Church, and our near neighbours, Ley Hill Methodists.

The sun shone on our August annual coach trip, this year to Eastbourne, and our Harvest Festival service sent bumper quantities of supplies to the Marylebone Project, which we have supported for many years.

As we prepare for Advent, Carols at the pub (Hen & Chickens), school Carol services, Christmas services and next year, we look forward to welcoming a new Interim Vicar to support us through the next 18 months or so. **Please pray for St. George's** to continue to grow during this period of vacancy and beyond.

St John's Ashley Green

On Battle of Britain Sunday we held our annual service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance for the Battle of Britain, followed by a wreath laying ceremony at the memorial. This was well attended by the representatives from RAF Association, British Legion, Air Cadet's and the wider community.

On Harvest Sunday we celebrated God's abundant provision, followed by a Harvest Brunch in the memorial hall. It was great to be able to continue to enjoy the blessing of being a church family together, sharing a fabulous meal.

In mid-September we launched Sunday school/children's church, which takes place in the Old School during our Sunday service. This has received really encouraging feedback already, and each week we have been blessed with either a new church family or returning new family whose children have been able to be a part of this. As a DCC we feel that in this season we want to engage more with the families, children and young people in our community, so **please do pray for** us in this as we seek to partner with God in his mission in this area.

St John's Bellingdon

September was a busy month with lots happening for Harvest. We had the last of our 'Summer Afternoon' events – this time craft activities for children and an opportunity to give thanks for God's gifts to us. Then we had our traditional Harvest Festival complete with Harvest Loaf, and rounded off our thanksgiving with our Harvest Supper. And these were all in the same 'multifunctional' church building!

This month we had a baptism! These are not common at Bellingdon but one comes up every 2 or 3 years! It was great to welcome the Bowden family (related to the Cox's) to church to celebrate with baptism of Willow – their fourth daughter!

Now we're starting to look forward to Advent and Christmas with our services in Church and at Huge Farm. We're also going to have another Christmas special craft time for children when the school term ends. And we're planning to once again deliver specially printed Christmas Cards to all the houses in the village and in a new venture to distant Asheridge!

St. Mary's Church

St. Mary's has just launched a new weekly evening service at 7pm, beginning the Sunday after Simon's farewell. The service has an informal feel and we're praying it will be a place people can invite friends. We've been delighted to see many people serving in new ways as the interregnum has got underway. We have recently launched a new weekly prayer meeting between the two morning services. A Parish team has just returned from Munsieville township in South Africa, where they have worked with local Christians to build and equip a fabulous new Girls Crisis Centre and to help equip a local church for compassion ministry in the community. There will be a gala dinner to feed back on the trip on Saturday 23rd November. **Please pray for:** the District Wardens and staff team working very hard as the interregnum progresses; continued growth in prayerfulness; our welcome of newcomers to our services; people to become Christians through preaching, personal evangelism and invitation to Christmas services, with Life Explored planned for January 2020.