

## Wareham Thoughts and Vision

Ahead of the Annual Meeting at the end of this month, I thought it would be good to share some of the ideas that the Ministry Team and I have been thinking about and planning for.

We held a productive thinking day on 11<sup>th</sup> August at Creech Grange, the week before the Sunday when we would have held our Country Day Out. We started with a Bible study looking at Jeremiah 6:16 – This is what the Lord says;

*“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls...”*

It was felt that this very much described where we were as a Church and society, following the lockdown and restrictions imposed as a result of the Coronavirus. The virus had threatened, not just our nation but the world, in a way and on a scale not seen since the second World War. It challenged us in which meant that we had to find new ways of living and worshipping. This challenge went deeper, in that we felt there was a challenge from God to his Church to do things differently and reach out in new ways. We were very much at a crossroads, we knew where we had come from and now we had before us three new roads we could take. What did these roads represent, and which was the right one for us as a parish? Our Thinking Day was the Ministry Team *asking where the good way was*, that we may walk in it. One thing was clear, both from the responses to the parish survey and from looking at the world around, things had changed, in the world, in the local community and in the Church, which meant that going back the way we had come was not an option. And so we prayed that we might know the right way.

Moving prayerfully on, we next looked at a matrix that helped us think about the things we had gained and lost, for better or worse, during lockdown. (Here's some answers):

**What had we gained but are happy to lose at the end of lockdown?**

Physical isolation, lack of contact, face masks, uncertainty...

**What had we gained and wanted to keep?** Online services, outdoor services, time to reflect, new ways of reaching out and communicating, embracing technology, greater unity in the parish, truly realising Church is not just buildings, greater awareness of mission partners.

**What had we lost and didn't want back?** Exclusion of the housebound, division between the churches/congregations, busyness, critical spirit.

**We had lost and wanted to have back?** Face to face contact/prayer ministry/visiting, singing, Communion in two kinds, shared activities, parish office as a community hub, Saturday coffee.

This helped us think about what had shaped our ministry in the past and how we might be able to re-shape it in the future. Of course many things were out of our control and could not change until either a vaccine or cure can be found for Covid-19, but it was useful to begin to think about the future ministry that there could be in the parish in the future.

We then looked at the feedback we had received from the parish survey, which gave us a clearer insight as to where we were as a parish at the present time, and where it was felt we should be heading. An overall synopsis on the survey and our reflections were written up as an insert to September's Newsletter, (please ask for a copy if you have not already seen it), or consult the parish website [www.warehamchurches.org.uk](http://www.warehamchurches.org.uk)

Following this, we started thinking more in practical terms about how the parish's ministry could develop and grow, and what that might mean in

terms of taking new initiatives whilst letting go past initiatives that have had their day.

We all agreed that the development of online services had been very worthwhile and helped us to reach out to people who in the past may not have been able to get to the parish church. We would continue to provide worship in this way and see if there are ways in which we can develop this. Maybe there are ways that we can be more creative by using Zoom and YouTube to provide more ministry and teaching. We would need to think carefully about this in order not to overload either the clergy or the parishioners!

We felt that listening to each other's life and faith experiences was helpful and something that we could include in our church and online services. Maybe these could be included in our sermons and other outreach ideas. The idea of having sermon themes, either following particular books of the Bible or spiritual themes to give continuity of thought and worship (to online and services in church) is something that we hope to pursue in the coming months.

A quote from Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, proved most helpful: *"We must learn to share the Gospel in ways that show it is both "good" and "news". If it isn't good news, it isn't the Gospel. The Gospel is about what God has done for us and what we can become in Christ; it's about a personal relationship with Christ being the answer to our deepest needs. The Good News offers lost people what they are frantically searching for: forgiveness, freedom security, purpose love, acceptance, and strength. It settles our past, assures our future and gives meaning to today. It is the best news in the world. Crowds always flock to hear good news. There is enough bad news in the world that the last thing people need is to hear more bad news when they come to church. They are looking for anyone who can*

*give them hope, help and encouragement. Jesus understood this and felt compassion for the crowds. He knew they were “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matthew 9:36)*

We felt that as a Church we all need to encourage one another to **be** the good news that society and the world need at this present time. The Rector is hoping to produce some online resources that seek to explore how we can do this, looking at how and why we believe, and how we can share this with others.

Also, in recent weeks we have felt that, as a parish we should be doing more to highlight and embrace the environmental issues that we face at this time, and so it is hoped that in the coming weeks and months we put together a group that will help us to do this. If you are interested in being part of this please see Helen, our Assistant Curate.

Simon Everett and the Ministry Team