

St Luke's Church, Whyteleafe

Church Meeting 25th October 2020

As the Annual Church Meeting for 2020 has now been delayed until April 2021 it seems sensible to briefly update the congregation about the current situation and our plans for the future.

The two Church wardens John Ritchie and Richard Goatcher along with Revd Annie gave a short address which is outlined below.

Introduction and Welcome – given by John Ritchie

Churchwarden's Address given by Richard Goatcher

In 2019, John and I were part of the Selection Committee that enthusiastically appointed Revd Annie and Revd Helen to serve, on a half-stipend each, in the two parishes of Whyteleafe and Chaldon.

We want to make it clear we utterly support both of these very talented priests and the excellent leadership they have given both parishes during the last challenging 18 months or so.

And of course, they have been wonderfully supported by Revd Sara, Leslie and, of course, by Alison as Parish Administrator to both parishes.

But John and I want to remind you of the areas of leadership that our priests have brought to us here in St Lukes during this year.

Firstly, Services:

- Almost as soon as the restrictions were lifted, Sunday morning services were devised that met the Government regulations
- As well, Annie and her helpers created online services, widely praised and enjoyed, for those who could not attend in Church
- Recently we had an excellent Battle of Britain service – an important service for our community
- A weekly service of Morning Prayer under Churches Together continues to be well attended, as well as online Evening Prayer during the week
- Although with restrictions of attendees, funerals and cremations continue to be taken

Then the management of the Church has continued. Many of us have come to master the technology of Zoom, so that

- PCC Meetings
- Standing Committees
- Re-ordering Committee
- Ministry Team
- Finance Committee
- Annie & Helen Clergy Meetings
- Pastoral Committee

Have all taken place so that the business of the Church could continue within the Government guidelines.

Many of you may not realise that Revd Annie has other outside responsibilities which need to be fitted in around and above the work I've already mentioned:

- Diocesan training for clergy
- Webinars provided by the Church of England
- She is a school Governor of both Whyteleafe School & St Peter and St Paul, Chaldon
- She is a member of the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education

All of these require time and attention to detail.

Now I want to go back to what I said at the beginning. The Bishop appointed our two priests to serve as HALF-TIME priests – NOT full-time. So all the work they undertake should be achieved in half a week. Any of us who think for one moment will realise that both of these fine priests have committed vastly more time and effort to leading our churches since 2019, and, on your behalf, John and I want to thank them for all they have done, and continue to do to lead and support our churches.

Vicar's Address given by Rev Annie Kurk

A church meeting. It is a strange thing to do when half of our church can't be present but it is also a very important thing to do so that you know we are transparently trying to follow God's will for our church.

I don't need to tell you that we are in the middle of a difficult and unexpected situation at the moment with Covid-19 dictating what we can and can't do as a church – safely. Our next annual meeting will be almost all taken up with reports on how the Coronavirus affected what we did.

And bearing in mind what we said at the beginning of this meeting about trying to keep in step with where God's Holy Spirit is leading us, please do let me know if you have any questions or words of encouragement about our focus.

So I want to talk about plans for the Future

Plans!! How can we plan when everything could change overnight if Boris so decides.

But we have Weddings and baptisms lining up

Memorial services lining up for those who died. I know how much we would all love to join with the recently bereaved to pay our respects before God in our lovely church. But we have to wait.

We are planning a Remembrance service totally outside this year – let's pray it can still go ahead.

Our All Souls Memorial service this year is planned for next week and has become more important within our wider community.

The future situation is that for a long time to come, many of our older and/or more vulnerable congregation members will no longer want to come out to church and I am very glad that they tell me that most are very pleased that we are recording services so they can access St Luke's via the internet.

It's important that we continue with that. Only this week did one such valuable member of our congregation explain that to me.

This is a time of change. For the church in general and also for St Luke's.

Bishop Jonathan's blog and a Southwark Clergy training has added impetus to our change. We all have to acknowledge that change is needed because the world has changed and it isn't going to go backwards, it's going to go forwards.

We are looking at a church where not everyone wants to come to the building to worship.

We are looking at a church where *new* people are testing the water.

So this is the time to make the changes that we need to do to address the change. And that's why I have sent a series of emails asking you to pray about how we transition through this season of change. I know most of you have found them helpful.

One change in the future is, that our re-ordering committee are looking into making our building more community friendly. We need in the future to welcome more and diverse groups of people into our building – offering it as a resource where we can hopefully cultivate some fertile ground for seeds of faith to be planted.

One change is to begin home groups. I know you used to have them in the past and they may look a bit different to what you are used to. But to have small groups of people meeting probably on Zoom at first but then later in homes to look at the Bible and faith and grow together. And rather than look just to our own two churches, we will include St Mary's too in this initiative.

One change is about how we pray together as a church. We now have regular and church prayer meetings on the first Wednesday of the month where we pray for each other, and for healing, and we will explore different ways of praying. We might change that to the first Monday of the month.

And another change is to bring in more younger people into the family of worshippers here at St Luke's. The plan is to change our services on the first Sunday of the month. The aim is to develop a new service at 9.30am on the first Sunday of the month for children and families including those who don't usually attend St Luke's Church. But we are having to delay plans due to the pandemic.

We have had to change many things, for example how we do assemblies in the local schools. Sara and I have planned a series of videos for the local schools. All school assemblies are currently delivered by video so this helps school staff and ensures that Jesus is still present in their acts of worship.

So.....

To do all these things, and more, there are some pretty important, and other not so important things that need to happen. And I am asking you all for your support with these changes.

Very important is that I thank those in our church who help and minister, even during this difficult time.

Let's acknowledge as we journey on that we may not have all the resources we need right now, we may not have all the people we need right now to make it happen but let's all of us, play our part and together honour the responsibility that God has given to each of us to be messengers of his gospel, just like the early Christians in Thessalonica.