

CHURCHWARDENS NOTES September 2023

We're pleased that the regular Family Services have restarted (first Sunday in the month, 9.00 am), after the summer break, with a service on 3rd September on the theme of "Jesus as a Boy" and "Back to School". The story was confidently announced by Finlay and beautifully read by Kieran, Thomas, Lisa and Meghan – this is the first time the "lesson" has been read by the children. We then had a little playlet on the same theme, starring Andrew Midgley as the Chief Priest (!), Steve & Nina Reading as Joseph and Mary, and Kieran as the boy Jesus. Richard then asked the adults to recall their first day at school. Matthew admitted that he had cried, and was made to stand on a chair, while Kevin thought school ended at break time, so walked the mile home through the centre of Manchester, where his mother promptly took him back to school! It was a very happy service.

We were also pleased that some members of the Parish Church Council were able to attend the visit of Bishop Ruth, the Bishop of Taunton, to a meeting of the Deanery in Wedmore Village Hall. Around fifty people attended, representing all the Benefices in the Deanery, and there was a lively discussion about what our communities should be like, and how our churches could (and should?) contribute to this, against a background of declining congregations and shortages of money. There are no easy answers!

Because of financial pressures across the Church of England, and specifically in the Bath & Wells Diocese, it has been reluctantly decided to reduce the number of working clergy in the Diocese. This will be done by natural wastage (no redundancies), but by 2026, the number of clergy in Axbridge Deanery (of which we are a part) will reduce from 9 (now) to 7, so will inevitably be spread more thinly across the 27 churches in Deanery. Our own vicar, Richard Neill, will have to cover five churches – Wedmore, Allerton, Theale, Blackford and Mark. This will clearly involve a reduction in his "presence" in the individual parishes. The details of this have yet to be worked out, but we



sincerely hope that, using a combination of our own Lay Worship Assistants, plus occasional appearances by local retired clergy etc, we will be able to sustain a weekly service in Allerton, but this is going to be difficult. Nevertheless, the Allerton Parish Church Council has provisionally approved this arrangement, acknowledging that such changes are inevitable in the circumstances, and must be faced head on. We will need to work together and be prepared do things differently.

And lastly, the good news! Jane and Andrew Midgley have just celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary, and we were delighted to celebrate with them at our service on 10th September, and to thank this wonderful couple for all their hard work and dedication to the church over the last fifty years, including as Churchwardens, Treasurer, organisers of Quest, and many other roles.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sun 1st October 9.00 am. Allerton Church. Family Harvest Festival. A cheerful service of thanksgiving for “all the good gifts around us”. Please bring produce to decorate the church, and non-perishable good to donate to the Cheddar Foodbank.

Sun 5th November 9.00 am. Allerton Church. Family Pet Service. An informal family service of blessing and thanksgiving for our pets. Bring your own pets (from hamsters to ponies) along for a blessing by the vicar.

Sunday 5th November 3.00 pm. Allerton Church. All Souls service. Where we remember those members of our community who have recently died, and express our support for those who mourn.

Saturday 11th November 10.45 am. Act of Remembrance and laying of a wreath at the cross in Allerton Churchyard.

With blessings, Jane and Matthew