All Saints’ Marcham with St. Luke’s, Garford

**Vicar’s Report for the APCM**

30th April 2023

**The big picture:**

It’s been a busy year since 1st May 2022 when we last met for the annual meeting

At the PCC day away in September we thought about our values as a church: **Christ-focused, Bible-based, Gospel-hearted, Kingdom-building, Spirit-filled.** These values are beginning to fuel and govern all that we are and do as churches. But we have more work to do to bed them into our church life across the parish.

Apart from what we have heard about already… lets see what we have been up to….

***Photo display….***

Particular thank yous:

Thank you to those that have served on the PCC in recent years and standing down today, **Pamela Carter-Moore** and **Ann Southwell**. Thank you for all your contributions to the council and your on-going support of the ministry across our parish which I know will continue.

It is a privilege and joy to serve and lead the staff team, and do likewise with them in relation to the church family across the parish. **Tamsin, Rob, Kate and Jill**, thank you for your friendship and tireless service. We are in a period of transition at the moment in the way that we work individually and together. Tamsin is now working as a nurse alongside her role as administrator, Rob is teaching at Reading University, and Kate will put down her role as Pastoral Care-co-ordinator at the end of June. So we are needing to be quite flexible in the way we work together and support each other, because all of our roles overlap as you would expect.

I want to pay tribute my clergy colleague, **The Revd’s Rosemary Siebert, Kevin Mentzel, Mark Newman and Brian Hyder-Smith**. It’s a privilege to serve with you in the leadership of our churches. It’s really great having clergy friends who contribute so much in the taking of services, in responding to pastoral needs, and leading homegroups, amongst other aspects of our church life. And thank you for your encouragement to me in my ministry also. It’s good to have a variety of shepherds in the church as we each seek to shepherd people to know Jesus better.

I have thanked our church wardens **Neil and Chrystal** already**.** However, I know you the huge responsibility you carry for the church and parish because we meet regularly to monitor the direction and life of the that we do in Marcham and Garford, and beyond – Neil and I are off the Moldova next week. You are a brilliant combination, and your care and dedication is exemplary especially in these tricky times for all Church of England churches.

A brief word about **Living in Love and Faith** and the bishops proposals. We need to acknowledge today that we here and the C of E more widely are seeking to navigate very choppy waters over these matters. As you know, I take no delight being the one at the helm whilst these two different tributaries in the delta have emerged. I think they have probably always been there, be that here in our church and certainly across the wider church. I hope over the next few months we will find a way to preserve both the maximum amount of unity over these issues and the individual personal consciences held here amongst our number. But I don’t think we can pretend that there are not two really quite divergent visions of what faithfulness to Lord looks like as they have appeared over the last few months. **Please pray** for on-going unity, gentleness and faithfulness to the Scriptures, for the sake the gospel here in this parish, and the present and future growth and health of our churches.

Let’s come to other particular departments of the church:

Thank you to the **home group leaders**. So much bread and better discipling work and pastoral care goes on in these groups. We are now back up to the full quota of 7 groups, with the Thursday evening one at Rob and Jay’s house now meeting again that’s tremendous. I’ve done a fresh count of all those involved in groups and it is about 70 people… half our electoral role. It was really great to draw the HG’s together in the autumn last year for the Bible Course.

**Garford** folks… **Carolyn Whiting, Debbie Flint, and Pamela Carter-Moore**, and I must mention the efforts of **Ben Skipp** and the choir who are really growing into the worshipping life of St Luke’s. Thank you for all that you do at St Luke’s and in the village building up our church life there. We’ve had some great services and occasions there over the last year, especially when Bishop Gavin came and around Christmas too. And in recent weeks we have seen more cross-over between the congregations especially with Alison Lyndon and Tamsin Gilbert getting involved or further involved with lots of the practical side of supporting services. Thank you Ali. You have really served with wisdom and grace.

Thank you to the **PCC and** officers… thank you to **Ruth Atkins** who wears the twin hats of secretary and Parish Safeguarding Officer, supported now by **Shae Porter**. Thank you to our deanery Synod reps, **Tim Jack and Caroline Manders.** **Bryan Eccles** works exceptionally hard as treasurer, wonderfully assisted by **John Scoble**. The finance team is undergoing some transition at the moment, with Bryan stepping down but remaining involved in the team with John, towards we hope, a new treasurer appointment in due course.

Thank you **Chris Nutman** for helping with the pay roll and electoral role.

The biggest departments of our parish have already reported back… children and families, youth, men’s and women’s ministry.

There is a whole host of people who lead our worship as churches in variety of ways. Anyone who lead prayers or does readings. Thank you. Public prayer and the public reading of the Scriptures are the bread and butter of Christian worship. We have a wonderful group of musicians and singers, and they work exceptionally hard to bring variety, beauty and life to our worship. Thank you for your creativity, expertise and willingness to use your gifts for our good and God’s glory.

The **Choir** here ceased its regular involvement in church serves but came back in great voice for the carol service. Thank you to the **worship band, and Eric Dunford** as our organist, in particular. And I hugely enjoyed the fellowship and iron sharpening iron on the **Leaders and Preachers Team**. Thank you for your ministry of prayer and the word with me. What a tremendous group! Many much larger churches do not have a team like ours.

**Everyone on the coffee / flowers / cleaning / sides-persons rotas / our bellringers / and banner makers:** Thank you all for your dedication, and helping to keep the church looking so well. The **AV team** are brilliant, as are **Doug Simons** and **James Crafer** who do much fantastic maintenance work on our buildings and churchyards.

It continues to be a privilege the bless this community and places very far from here through our **mission partners** further afield and our links with **key community groups** here.

We continue to have the joy or partnership with **Ripple Effect** and with Niccu and Lili in Moldova with **MML (Marcham Moldova Lifeline)** and **Andy and Emma** as they head out this year to Central Asia.

And closer to home, we have church people fully involved in many aspects of the community… the **Marcham Society, the Marcham Centre, The Anson Trust**, the **parish meeting in Garford** and **parish council** here, and especially **Thirsty Café.** Thank you to those of you do give your time and energy and prayer to these key community organisations. They are your mission and so they are our mission too.

**Let’s think ahead then…** We are very busy parish…and we are seeing some **growth.** There is much to praise God for.

We have seen bumper numbers at times… Christmas services, Easter services, all-age events here (Family Fridays, Friday Club and Holiday), our youth work is in a very healthy place, women’s and men’s work thriving.

We have made some headway on the building project ideas here… we have outlined plans that has been given the approval of the DAC to take to the stage of more detailed plans and costings. Let’s keep going with that.

I’m mindful we need to be a good church not just for extroverts and activists, though, of which we have many. We need to be a place of **prayer and rest and drawing closer to God** just as we are… without tech, or food, or craft, or shifting pews and tables… important, necessary and wonderful those things are: **being Christians before we do Christian things. And doing Christian things because we love to serve the Lord not just because we love to do.**

I think we need to be a little more mindful of the cost of what we do together as church family. Church and ministry is invigorating but also it is draining. It gives God no glory to have people burning out. I’ve been with quite a number of people here close to that over the last year, and I have felt that too.

So I am praying for a year of growth, maturity, faithfulness to Lord…. more of God.

Revd Nick Weldon (Vicar)