

Fall programs and activities have certainly taken off, with an awful lot of activity in and around St John's. The Clergy and staff have been busy seeking to connect with as many folk as possible, keeping our worship services resourced and enlivened, being out in the community, and planning for the coming months.

Ministry Fund (again)

Terms and conditions of the ministry fund will be brought to this Parish Council meeting. I apologise that I didn't have these prepared for our May meeting but some personal difficulties have meant that May was a difficult month, and those difficulties have continued. Though I have not missed any of my regular duties in the past months, it has been a difficult year for me, and I have appreciated the graciousness shown by many who have known about my home situation and the support I have received from most.

Here is a reminder of the original idea of the ministry fund as I presented to PC back in April, this taken from an email written in response to a query from a Parishioner

"The Ministry Fund was something I asked the PC to consider when it turned out that there was a possibility of a Curate coming to St John's - something we hadn't expected, and something that we had not budgeted for. It wasn't something that we foresaw - but as part of our responsibility to serve the whole church, as one of the few parishes with the means to train and resource a Curate, I felt it incumbent upon us to meet this request whilst at the same time utilising the funds that we have which, to be honest, are simply sitting in an investment fund doing no good to the present life of the parish. As I said to the PC at the time, the constant refrain used to be 'it's for a rainy day' - well, it's time to get the umbrellas out.

The request to consider a Curate placement raised for me the issue of our stewardship and our need to support the current ministries of the church - so rather than designate money simply 'to pay a Curate' I requested that we think bigger and allocate a certain amount to 'Ministry' in the hope of supporting emerging ministries, lay and ordained, should the opportunity arise - by contributing to salaries and supporting ministries long and short term with funding, perhaps honoraria. Some of the funding for Gillian's stipend and housing allowance comes from the money previously paid for Jane's 1/4 salary, some from the Diocese and as much as we can from General funds - the Ministry fund will be called on to assist in balancing that out at the end of the year so that those costs are covered without it adding extra strain to our budget."

Planning and programs

Our staff team has undertaken festival and general planning for the weeks leading up to Pentecost 2017 when Bishop Logan will be coming to offer Confirmation to any who wish it, Adults and Young People. We have initial plans in place for Advent, Epiphanytide, Lent, Holy Week, and Easter which will be circulated to wardens and PC.

I've also been considering how we might mark Advent this year, and how we might facilitate Daily Reflections on the Web and published in Church as we have now been doing for three years. For this year I am taking the Theme of 'Advent Hope' and will invite Parishioners (including PC!) to contribute a short piece on what gives them/contributes to/inspires Hope in them. As before it could be a picture, a piece of music or art, a poem - but I would like an brief reflection on why this particular thing inspires hope. I'd also like to be able to put a

picture of each contributor in the article, a 'selfie' or a shot provided by them – I am planning to be strict with the deadline of Advent Sunday (Nov 27th) for all of the contributions to be in, with pictures.

New colleagues, new ideas

Having Bill, Gillian and Patrick as new colleagues along with the invaluable ongoing support of Kevin our Priest Associate, all of our staff, and honoraries has been a refreshing and inspiring change. I hope for many new ideas, and opportunities for us to explore liturgy, spirituality, and growing in faith, in the coming months.

One of the ideas, which has been advertised in the bulletin and shared in announcements, is the liturgy morning on October 22nd, starting at 9.30am, which will be concerned with how liturgy fits together and consider some changes in liturgical practise which I am keen for us to adopt. PC are welcome to attend, and if you haven't considered taking an active part in our liturgical ministries – verger, welcome or greeter, intercessions, reading, serving, healing team etc – then please do, it is a deeply rewarding way to engage in the wider ministries of our community.

Stewardship and more

In the coming weeks will be offering a more detailed presentation of the sometimes confusing terms within our finances both to PC, on November 6th after Church, and to the whole community, on November 13th following our Remembrance Service. It is obvious that many do not understand the way in which things are being reported, and many do not avail themselves of the information we seek to make as available as possible. We are addressing this, and these meetings are an attempt to be clear and open and encourage our community to be informed about our finances.

We will be having a Pledge Sunday at the end of November (Advent Sunday) and circulating a stewardship letter and some information in the next few weeks as we lead up to that.

Our Local Community

Whilst considering how we might find out more about our local North Park community, and seeking ways in which to meet the needs of the place where our church community is planted, I have become more involved in the North Park Neighbourhood Association and am now on the board. I hope this will be a way that St John's continues to grow in our relationships in this place. Anne Moon is still our representative to the Association and I am grateful for her commitment and dedication to our local and church community.

Thank you all for your attention,

Respectfully submitted

Alastair