

What's going on?!

As you will know, circumstances in my family have been difficult recently – and in order to stop the inevitable ‘rumour mill’ which springs up around such events, I want PC to be clear about what is happening, as much as I can, whilst respecting the privacy of my family members.

My daughter, Kat, 15, is in hospital, and probably will be for some while. This has meant a shift in how Jo and I are able to cover, or not, household duties and childcare for our 12 year old son, Jack. This is made more complicated by summer vacation plans and events. With the difficulties that arise, the Bishop and I have discussed how best to address this situation. My Archdeacon duties have been cut to a very bare minimum, and whilst I am not taking a block of time off at present, I am making myself available to my family as a priority whilst covering necessary duties in the parish. I continue to preach, lead worship, visit, prepare and attend meetings/events as able – though with the proviso that the family will come first.

I did discuss at length with Bishop Logan whether I, or the parish, would be best served by taking a leave of absence – however, even with the greater demands of my family at this time, to take time off would only leave me at home alone the majority of the time, and would not allow me either the support, or the challenge, of serving this, my community – both of which are profoundly good things!

In the parish

With our Parish Administrator moving on we are, at present, without an admin. Our bookkeeping has been contracted externally and systems for keeping accounts and payments are being put into place. This has afforded us an opportunity to consider our whole shape of administration for St John’s and the Wardens and staff are currently engaged in conversations about what might emerge. This is, and will be, uncomfortable, as we must ask hard questions about what we are, and are not, able to do – and what systems we need to revise, what we need to instigate, and what we need to drop. Change is never easy, and even less so when we are instigating change whilst responding to immediate needs.

I am sad to report that I have received the resignation of Heather Lee, our Treasurer, effective immediately. We are looking *post haste* at appointing a new treasurer.

Visioning

Whilst some things are on hold, we must still consider our direction in the coming months and years. I have been seeking a day in the fall when the parish as a whole are invited to discuss our visioning and strategy, and I am hoping for the Bishop to be able to contribute to this day as his Visioning process, which I have experienced in other parishes, is unlike most Vision enabling I have known and is imaginative and creative in a way which I believe will benefit St John’s.

I have heard some complaints and concerns that we are ‘visioning’ again – but I am convinced that St John’s needs to continue to build on the work done by Quo Vadis some time back, and to come out with a focussed, structured plan that engages and challenges us to meet goals with regards to issues including, but not limited to,

- Church redevelopment
- Governance and decision making
- Adult Education and Small Groups
- Social Justice and Social Action
- Prayer and Worship/Spirituality
- Stewardship/Giving and Finances
- Church identity and growth

At present our engagement with these issues is often ad hoc, or in the process of restarting – we need to have some ‘joined up thinking’ that not only reflects who we are, but who we want to be, and where we want to go with some concrete aims and standards to work to, and for us as a community to hold ourselves accountable to.

Exciting Times

Despite the difficulties that we are experiencing at present, there is also much to celebrate. I continue to give thanks for the hard work which so many people put into the life of our community. I am deeply grateful for excellent colleagues and friends in this community.

I am particularly excited that in a few days we will have a new priest in our midst! Rev Gillian Hoyer is at present away on retreat pending Ordination to the Presbyterate on (God willing and the creek don’t rise) Saturday 22nd July at 4pm here at St John’s. Gillian will be ordained with the Revds Christopher Sansome and Matthew Brown. Gillian’s first Eucharist as presider will take place on Sunday 23rd July, and we are privileged to have the Dean of Theology for Huron College, the Rev’d Dr Todd Townsend, as our preacher for this Sunday also. Please keep Gillian, and those being ordained, in your prayers at this important time, and in all of their ministries.

A Few Words In Closing

My thanks to you all for your support, prayers and continued hard work, I appreciate all you do and all you are. I continue to be available for coffee and conversation, and will make time to see anyone who asks for it. I hope that we can continue to work on being a communicating congregation – and that we will speak truth in love to one another. I will say again that if there is something you have concerns about, speak to the person responsible, not to one another – as one of my colleagues said “It seems our favourite shape is a triangle.” – talking about others, rather than to them, quickly creates an unhealthy environment and I would like us to grow in our trust and care for one another, just as I would like us to work together, rather than encouraging small group huddles which can often turn into power struggles or create divisive politics.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve this community, and look forward to our continued growth, in faith hope and love.

Thank you all

Alastair