

New Year Message from Rev Catherine Sunday 14th January 2024

Dear friends

Firstly, may I wish you all a Happy New Year.

As we begin our 2024 New Year journey together, I wanted to let you know of some changes that will happen this year.

The Parish of Gornal and Sedgley, as you know, has historically been a two-clergy parish, however, since the retirement of Rev Guy Hewlett as Team Rector, and in the knowledge that we cannot financially support two stipendiary clergy, we need to work within our means, which is one stipendiary clergy. Having one member of clergy has its consequences, as I've mentioned previously, in what we can offer in terms of ministry and services.

After Guy's retirement, we made some changes to the rota during the first year, reducing the number of services in the parish, because of only having one stipendiary clergy. Towards the end of that first year, we were offered support for one service a month from Top Church in Dudley. At that time Rev Calum joined the parish on placement, and I am sure you will agree that having him with us has been a blessing.

Calum's time with us had been two-fold in nature, firstly to give Calum broader experience of parish ministry in the Church of England, its blessings, and challenges, and secondly to help us discern the scope of the Renewals Project at All Saints. Calum has been working alongside myself, the renewals hub team, treasurers, and Diocesan staff to develop what this will look like and to prepare the project proposal for submission. There is still some work to be completed and the hope is that we will be able to make the submission in the first quarter of the year. Once the proposal has been submitted, the work does not end there! Further work will need to take place this year to ensure the project will be implemented in a timely manner, recruiting staff, developing a new accounting system in the parish, and enabling the project to commence. It is hoped that the new team members will increase capacity, not just for All Saints but also across the parish.

Rev Calum has now fulfilled all the requirements of curacy and is actively seeking where God is calling him to next in his ministry. Exact timing for when Calum will move on to pastures new is unknown currently, and I am conscious that we need to prepare for the time when he is no longer with us. Calum leaving will have an impact on the parish, how we do things and how I am able to minister, solely as the only stipendiary clergy and particularly relating to continuing the implementation of the renewal project and the service rota.

The current rota works while Calum is with us, and once Calum leaves the parish, the service rota will need to be changed again. Before Christmas, at the PCC and DCC meetings we discussed the challenges of the rota in the coming year. With Rev Calum with us, we can offer three communion services at All Saints, two communions and one lay led service at St Peters, and at St Andrews one communion and three lay led services. I want to take this opportunity to thank Canon Jan Humphries as LLM and Suzanne Bradley as Worship ALM for all that they do in the parish leading worship. Also, thanks to Keith Tomlinson for enabling All Saints to be open on Sunday mornings when there is no service Scheduled.

When Calum leaves, the service pattern will remain the same for All Saints and St Andrew's, but the pattern for St Peters will change to two services a month, with a lay led service on the second Sunday, and a communion service on the 4th Sunday.

I want to thank St Peters DCC for graciously agreeing this change and reducing services to two a month. This is to enable All Saints to maintain three services a month, while we progress and enable the Renewals project to happen at All Saints. The DCC's and PCC have also agreed that St Peters will host all the 5th Sunday Team services, in recognition of the reduced number of services at the church.

This is a gracious gift, from St Peters to All Saints, and I want strongly to encourage church members to support St Peters on Sundays when there is no service at the church you normally attend, and Team Services by attending St Peters.

The aspiration is that this will be for a minimal period of time, in the hope that once the new team are in place, possibly later in the year, that they will take a lead on the Family Service

at All Saints, which would then enable me to take a second communion service at St Peters a month, and the Team service to rotate around the parish once again.

During this year, working with our Mission Accompanier Chris Sheehan and the hub team, we will be developing a Vision Statement for each of our churches. Many organisations have vision statements, you may be able to recall some from your work experiences. Many churches also develop vision statements to help them focus their activities on the values and vision they have. Developing a Vision statement will enable us to reflect on who we are as church communities. I hope that you will engage with the process, as we are all part of the church here in Gornal and Sedgley and all our voices are important.

I want to thank you all for your support so far regarding the Renewals Project, and your ongoing support this year. Also, thanks to all our Church Wardens, PCC and DCC members.

Change is always difficult, but I would encourage us to always keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. This year will be challenging, and my hope is that we can all work together, seeing the opportunities that we have, and discerning what God is calling us to today and in the future.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the content of this letter, or anything that is on your heart regarding the parish please do speak to me.

With every blessing

Catherine

Rev Catherine Mitchell

Acting Team Rector

Parish of Gornal and Sedgley

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