

Here we are in October already. Some things are changing - the season, the trees, the weather - and some things are not changing as quickly as we wish them to: we are still enduring the negative social effects of this virus. I know back in March when we went into lockdown we were thinking that things would be “back to normal” sometime over the summer. Yet here we are, in the autumn, and things are definitely not back to normal; instead we’ve had to create our new normal.

In church we’ve had to find new ways of conducting worship - including a reappraisal of the traditional Harvest service; Sandhurst’s was on 27 September; Benenden’s is on 4 October. (We will also be reviewing how we mark the annual traditions of All Souls’ Day and Remembrance Sunday in the church this year.) Back to Harvest: the need for produce is just as great - perhaps greater this year - but the type of produce we can donate and the way we handle the produce is restricted this year due to COVID-19. But we can still come to the Harvest service and thank God for the abundance of his blessing. We can be grateful for the area in which we live, and not take it for granted, which is so easy to do; many people are far worse off than we are due to the circumstances in which they live. So let’s recognise that, be grateful for our good fortune, and try not to grumble (too much) about this dragging on and on.

There are some happy things going on to rejoice and celebrate. We have conducted some marriage ceremonies in church, and also a baptism service; all happy family events, albeit with restrictions on numbers. My experience of this has been that reducing the numbers has made the services - weddings particularly - more personal. We have also restarted our midweek Communion service at the Mission Church Sandhurst on a Tuesday. It will be a real joy when we can also get back to our toddler groups, home groups, and after-school club.

We also have had the joy of Ylva Blid-Mackenzie being ordained at Canterbury Cathedral last month, and so we now have another ordained member of our Ministry Leadership Team in the parishes: Ylva has been ordained as a Deacon (you’ll see her wearing a dog-collar from now on) and is working as our curate. If you want to know what the difference is between a deacon and a curate, ask her when you see her around the village.

Let’s remember to make the most of these happy occasions and celebrate them; they are an important part of our changed new normal.

**Revd David Commander, Rector**