

The End of an Era . . .

On the third Sunday of Epiphany, John's sermon focused on the story of the Wedding at Cana, which we find in John's gospel (2:1-11.) This is the first of seven miracle stories to be found in John's gospel, and John encouraged us to consider the words of the steward towards the end of the miracle: 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' It is these words that provide a key purpose of this miracle. It is a reminder that God has saved the best for last. While the scriptures of the Old Testament tell us a great deal about God's work and the way people have responded, and it is a good story, the best arrives when God sends God's own son.



And, as John suggested, if this story reminds us that God has saved the best for last, we must also dare to believe that the best is yet to come. That through seeking to draw closer to God, we really can see transformation in the world.

As I prepare to leave the community at St Mary's, I do so in the belief that we have come a long way together over the past six years. I was licensed as Priest-in-Charge at a time when this community was healing from some challenging times. We have never dwelt on what went before. As soon as I arrived, it was clear to me that there is so much to cherish and celebrate about both individuals and the community as a whole. We have built on those strengths over the past years. The pandemic was, perhaps, a defining moment because it shook us all, and yet we were in a position to dig deep and hold together.

St Mary's is a happy place, and there is a growing confidence in all that we offer within the local community. And yet I also leave daring to believe that the best is yet to come. I hold dear all that we have achieved together over the past six years. And I also believe that these years have built firm foundations for all that lies ahead.

It is impossible for me to know what lies ahead for this community. This is what I do know, though. Within the congregation there is an understanding of what it means to love and be loved. People look out for one another here, and are prepared to put themselves out to help others. There is also a deep desire to live out the faith that is professed on a Sunday morning.

I believe that St Mary's is ready for the next step of the journey, and that it will be exciting and full of possibility. There is someone waiting to be the next Vicar who will have a vision of what is possible in this place among this community. And in the meantime I will be holding you all in my prayers, knowing how much you have given me over these past six years.

Rev Theresa Ricketts
Vicar

... The Process For A New Era

With the departure of Theresa, the parish starts a phase known as a vacancy, during which the churchwardens Dan and Peter, and our Area Dean Rosemary Donovan assume the legal responsibility for the running of the parish. We will be supported in this by the Archdeacon of Dorking, Martin Breadmore who visited us on 16th January to explain the process to find a new vicar. A copy of his newsletter will remain available at the back of the church and contains a plan which, if all goes well, will see us with a new vicar in October 2024.

We are very blessed to be supported by John and Maggie through this vacancy, who will join with the Standing Committee to form the "Vacancy

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Management Team". The intention is to sustain our normal patterns of worship where this is practically possible. We also appreciate Jason being on the preaching rota, and it is likely we will also see some visiting clergy during this time. We are fortunate to have a broad team of helpers at St Mary's and we thank the many of you who will step up to help during this time of vacancy.

As well as these day-to-day issues, the PCC needs to start work urgently on putting together a Parish Profile. The bulk of that document is concerned with a description of the present situation here at St Mary's and is similar to our annual report. Rod will ask those who normally contribute to the annual report to write their section reports early this year. Please be prepared to work on this in February and help Rod pull this together promptly.

Most importantly, the parish profile document will also need to include a succinct statement of needs. A Vacancy Vision Workshop will be held on **Sunday 25th February** with the prayerful facilitation of Revd Simon Taylor from Godalming. We will give every opportunity to the congregation to share their thoughts with PCC members prior to this meeting and allow those who ask to be directly involved.

A small parish profile team will help the PCC in the drafting of this work, iterating versions for wide review and discussion, and ensure this is also reflected in our new website. The overall profile needs to be ready for signoff by PCC and Archdeacon in mid April, which will allow us to keep to the plan for advertising in May, shortlisting in June, and interviewing on 1st /2nd July.

Should you have any thoughts or questions, please do not hesitate to contact the wardens or any of the members of the management team.

Peter Harvey & Dan Smithers
Churchwardens

Prayer for the Vacancy

God our Father, you have welcomed each one of us in Jesus and called us to be His Body in this place. Send us your Holy Spirit at this time of uncertainty and change, to fill us with vision and energy and faithfulness in prayer, that we may be true to our calling to bring new life to our community. Give your heavenly wisdom to those who are to choose a new incumbent for this parish, that she or he may be a wise and gentle shepherd of your people, ready to serve us with joy, to build us up in faith and to lead us by example in loving obedience to Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

February Services and Events

Sunday 4	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion and Children's Groups
	12.30	Bring & Share Farewell Lunch
	18.00	Spirituality Course in the Cuddington Hall
Sunday 11	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion
Wednesday 14	10.00	Holy Communion with Imposition of Ashes
<i>Ash Wednesday</i>	20.00	Sung Communion with Imposition of Ashes
Thursday 15	14.30	Afternoon Club in the Cuddington Hall
Saturday 17	10.30	Women's Group in the Cuddington Hall
Sunday 18	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion and Children's Groups
Monday 19	19.30	Knit & Natter Group in the Leverton Room
Wednesday 21	20.00	PCC Meeting in the Cuddington Hall
Sunday 25	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion
	TBA	Vacancy Vision Workshop

Morning Prayer is said in church every weekday morning at 9am

Everyone is very welcome