



The Lion

A Monthly News Sheet for St. Mark's Church, Basford

www.stmarksbasford.co.uk

August 2021



“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old people shall dream dreams, and your young people shall see visions”. Joel 2:28

I have chosen this verse from Joel for the feedback form being distributed around the church asking for your views on how we can develop our mission and ministry, and for this newsletter.

The reason? Because I think God's promise to Joel speaks to us of the capacity to dream and see a vision for the future – at all ages and in all circumstances.

And we've certainly had quite some circumstances in the past 18 months!

At the beginning of 2020, I went to a training day organised by Lichfield Diocese about responding to trauma. We looked at the role of churches and their leaders in supporting and being alongside communities affected by disaster and helping them towards recovery. The examples ranged from Hurricane Katrina to the Grenfell fire.

One thing they had in common was that an event, a 'something' happened: people reacted with anger, grief, loss and the whole range of messy human emotions; they rolled up their sleeves to help out; church communities rallied round; people got tired and discouraged; they eventually rebuilt their lives; they moved on, sadder but perhaps also wiser. The event had ended.

The course was really useful – but one thing it didn't flag up at that time was the possibility of an ongoing pandemic! We haven't found ourselves in the situation of a finite event with some kind of

closure. Instead, our recent experience has felt like

being trapped in a washing machine – buffeted and tossed in all directions, not sure which way is up, or when this upheaval is going to end. We've had to get used to uncertainty upon uncertainty while looking anxiously for light at the end of the tunnel.

We're not quite out of the woods yet, and I suspect that for some time to come we will be in 'Meerkat mode' – on our hind legs scanning the horizon anxiously for threats and making contingency plans for all eventualities.

So, two things to ponder.

First, we are all battle-weary and battle-scarred. Living on our nerves for 18 months takes its toll, mentally and physically.

Now is the time to be gentle with ourselves and with each other. Now is the time for tolerance, forbearance and remembering that every one of us is loved and cherished by God, that we are all part of a giant, loving and mutually supportive Christian family.

So let us pray for ourselves and each other, that we may feel God's soothing and healing in our lives and our communities. We need to take time to name our sorrows and burdens, recognise and mourn what has been lost.

But secondly, we have been here before as a nation – and had the courage to start dreaming dreams and seeing visions in the midst of desperate circumstances.

In the middle of the Second World War, when you might have thought everything would have been concentrated on the immediate war effort, Sir

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William Beveridge started work on the project which became the Beveridge Report, addressing the needs of the ill and the vulnerable. And that culminated in the founding of the NHS and a system of care designed to be 'from cradle to grave'.

I think that is an example that even in tough times, the light of Christ guides us. We dare to dream, to hope, to love and to laugh, inspired by a loving God who never lets us down.

As St Paul says: 'If God is for us, who is against us?'

He goes on: 'For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Inspired by that love, let's dare to dream – and to act.

I'd like to end by sharing these words from American Lutheran pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber. She wrote them last Easter, but they apply at any time of year:

"My Easter request is this: Help us remember that resurrection isn't reversal, that as we return to life, we are carrying our own wounds from loss and isolation. But we are also emerging with new beauty and new wisdom. We are not who we were. But we do get to discover who we are."

Blessings

Alison

Worship Services during August

1 st	9 th after Trinity	9.30am	'First Sunday' with HC
4 th	Wednesday	10.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)
8 th	10 th after Trinity	9.30am	Holy Communion
11 th	Wednesday	10.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)
15 th	11 th after Trinity	9.30am	Holy Communion
		1.00pm	Baptism
18 th	Wednesday	10.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)
22 nd	12 th after Trinity	9.30am	Holy Communion
25 th	Wednesday	10.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)
29 th	13 th after Trinity	9.30am	Holy Communion

A note from Andrew Dawswell (Rural Dean & Vicar of Westlands)

Shaping for Mission - Newcastle

Over last year, in the light of the pandemic, Lichfield Diocese has asked each deanery to set up a team to conduct the first two phases of the *Shaping for Mission* Process.

The first of these was to conduct a review of the extensive activity in each of our 22 parishes, which immediately highlighted the huge range of effective ministry that is being undertaken. It also suggested to the team some challenges - especially the need for parishes to try and find ways of moving from the very good work being done in making contacts, to seeking to engage more proactively in evangelism and discipleship; and also in reaching out to under 50's.

The second phase was to produce a deanery vision. This readily affirmed the value of the three diocesan emphases on Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism. In addition, we highlighted the centrality of our parishes, which are very diverse geographically, socially and in regard to church tradition; and seeing the role of Newcastle chapters, synods etc as *Supporting each other in Growing God's Kingdom across the deanery*. Nonetheless the report includes several possibilities to consider in more detail over the next year, as to how we might benefit from a little more deanery working together.

The third phase of *Shaping for Mission* will in many ways be the most painful; as the process has been set up to make responsible decisions about future deployment. This is in response to a 10% or so reduction in stipends which can be afforded - which was partially apparent even before the financial effects of COVID. The bishop and archdeacon will be taking the lead on this, working with the rural dean and lay chair. Decisions taken will aim to reflect the vision priorities articulated by the deanery team, and also bear in mind some specific considerations that our report concluded with.

For the full report please see Rev'd Alison