

News for the Pews

Date: 19th March 2023

Sunday: Mothering Sunday (Lent 4)



News and Views

We had a good joint PCC meeting last Saturday to look at the options to make our structures in the Group more effective. (I think it is very unlikely we will find a part-time priest interested in taking on six PCCs and all their attendant business.) There were opportunities to ask questions and to hear the experiences of the Offchurch Group who have been operating successfully as a “united PCC” (one PCC, 4 parishes) for several years now. Please see over the page for a brief summary of our discussion. I stress that this is not a process of each parish having to “fight their own corner” but about sharing a common life as the body of Christ in a spirit of generosity. I commend it for further exploration!

Confirmation – if you or anyone you know is interested in confirmation, please get in touch with me.

Events for the week

Monday 20th March – Celtic Church Spring Equinox at 7pm in Napton churchyard (see attached poster)

Monday 20th March – Priors Hardwick PCC meeting at 7pm at Barley House

Wed 22nd March – BCP Holy Communion at 10.00am at St. John the Baptist Church, Lower Shuckburgh

Wed 22nd March – Lent lunch from 12 noon in Napton Village Hall

Wed 22nd March – Lent course at 7.30pm in Stockton Church

Thurs 23rd March – Wormleighton APCM at 7pm in church

Friday 24th March – The funeral of Wilf Cole at 11am in St. Lawrence Church, Napton

Sunday 26th March – Napton Craft Fair in aid of church funds from 11am till 3pm in Napton Village Hall

Sunday 26th March – Stockton APCM at 11.45am in church

Sunday 26th March – the baptism of Billie-Jo at 2.30pm in St. Lawrence Church, Napton

Looking ahead

3rd – 8th April – Holy Week – please see our website or parish magazines for details of all the services. If you would like to attend the Maundy Thursday service on 6th April at 7pm in Stockton, please let me know as we will be sharing a meal - plus footwashing (optional!), Holy Communion and Tenebrae (a series of bible readings as we journey with Jesus in the shadows).

Monday 10th April – Easter Fair from 2pm to 4pm at St. John the Baptist Church, Lower Shuckburgh

Services next Sunday 26th March – Lent 5:

10.30am – CW Holy Communion at St. Michael’s Church, Stockton (followed by APCM)

10.30am – Morning Worship at St. Peter’s Church, Wormleighton

3.00pm – 4th Sunday at St. Leonard’s Church, Priors Marston

5.00pm – BCP Evensong at St. Lawrence’s Church, Napton

Bible readings for the week are: Romans 8:6-11 and John 11:1-45

And finally

As we head into a time of change, let us pray: “In every beginning, in every moment, God may surprise us with new possibilities, new courage and wisdom and new dimensions of faith. This is our God, Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit. Let us be the people of God this day. O God, we are your very human people and we confess that we do not always expect to be challenged by your creativity, or your prophetic word. We often think and act as though we know the future, we know what is expected of us and do what we always do. Forgive us if we have lost the dream of your life. Bring to us your surprising grace, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

God bless,
Gillian

(For more details of events and diary dates, see our website: www.thebridgesgroup.org.uk or the parish magazines)

A very brief summary of the discussion at the Joint PCC meeting to look at effective structures held on 11th March 2023

- The option of two “united PCCs” seems to be the most beneficial. In our case, three parishes (Priors Marston, Priors Hardwick & Wormleighton // Napton, Lower Shuckburgh & Stockton) would become one PCC, inheriting all the legal responsibilities of the predecessor parishes.
- Each existing parish would be represented on the united PCC – with “due representation from each place”. Several options could be explored – there is room for flexibility.
- There would still need to be some form of delegated decision-making to each parish, eg around general maintenance of the building and setting up for church services. The role of the united parish would not be dissimilar to the work of the current Group Council – but it would become a *legal* body, holding responsibility for the buildings and for worship. The number of small committees may not reduce but there would be a better joined-up decision-making process.
- One of the obstacles is likely to be around finance. There would be one set of accounts with one treasurer. Money that has been given to a previous parish for a specific use would be held in a “restricted” fund, with other gifts and donations being put into the main account to meet general running costs. It was noted that the scheme would benefit from economies of scale (eg some elements of church insurance could be shared) and if finance is an issue, pooling resources makes sense - “there is more we can do together than separately.”
- There were concerns about a loss of local identity but it was felt that this was not likely to happen because individuals remain part of their local village. The Offchurch group found that people remained committed to running their local church.
- It was acknowledged that there could still be difficulties appointing officers and churchwardens – but surely less of a problem than finding 12 wardens and six sets of officers! There would need to be a clear job description for each role. This is about re-arranging *how* the work is done.
- There are still lots of questions to be answered and details to be worked out but it would seem sensible to take the process forward to the next stage and see where it leads. It is a lengthy and legal process. Establishing a “Pastoral Scheme” would require consultation with the wider congregation and community and could take from 9 months to a year to put in place.
- And, *whichever route we take*, it will not resolve the problem of finding people willing to be churchwardens or PCC officers or take away the difficulties of maintaining six ancient buildings.