

Newsletter

Bruton Pitcombe Redlynch Brewham Shepton Montague Wyke Champflower



Queen Elizabeth II

'Shared Local Ministry' is the term being used by the Diocese to describe a model of ministry which, it is hoped, will enable us to continue our witness and service in these parishes. There is an article about this below and an invitation to a meeting of Deanery Synod at which it will be further explained and explored.

In essence, the central idea is that as Christians we all have a share in and a responsibility for delivering God's ministry, and we now need to develop this into a daily reality so that ministry is more broadly shared and less heavily dependent on stipendiary clergy. This need arises not because of a shortage of clergy, but an overall reduction in the levels of giving from parishes towards the costs of paying for stipendiary clergy. Collectively across the Diocese, we either need to meet the costs of the

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stipendiary clergy, or reduce the number of clergy to a level that we are willing to pay for (the Diocese has already embarked on other cost-cutting measures alongside the proposed reduction in clergy, but those measures alone do not deliver the necessary savings).

So what might this Shared Local Ministry look like in this Benefice? That is the question we are being asked to consider over the coming months. Where do our strengths lie and what are the resources God has provided to us for ministry here? If the amount of ministry received from stipendiary clergy were to reduce, how might we respond? What shape do we envisage church will take here?

The Benefice Council has met to begin to engage with these questions and formulate a response to the Diocese. Please do your own thinking and praying and let the Rector (or your churchwardens) know your thoughts. One thing seems reasonably certain: the current situation whereby we are provided with stipendiary clergy in return for a financial contribution that does not cover the cost of that ministry will not continue for much longer.

The Rector is more than willing to meet with people individually or in groups to discuss these issues.

If you have something to contribute to a future edition of this newsletter, do please send it to the Rector at the benefice office address.

Easy-to-follow details of how to receive this newsletter by email can be found on the St Mary's website, or email benefice@stmarysbruton.org. If you are aware of someone who might like to receive it but does not use email, please consider printing a copy yourself and delivering it to them.

NEWS

The next bishop of Bath and Wells has been chosen, though not yet appointed. Rt Rev'd Michael Beasley is currently the Bishop of Hertford, and we look forward to welcoming him and his family to this Diocese, hopefully early in the Autumn. You can read about his background on the Diocesan website.

We have said our farewells to Rev'd Roger Burt, who has now left Sexey's Hospital and moved to Chard to take up a new post at Cricket St Thomas. He goes with our continuing prayers for his part in God's ministry in that place. We await news of the appointment of a new chaplain at Sexey's Hospital.

The art exhibition 'Flock', curated by Bo Lee & Workman Galleries continues at St Peter's, Redlynch until 11 June. This has generated considerable interest and we are considering the possibility of further exhibitions at St Peter's.

St Peter's, Shepton Montague is opening its doors as a film venue. This is part of finding ways of enabling greater community use of the church building and serving the local community. First up is Kenneth Branagh's film 'Belfast' on 8 June at 7.30 pm. Tickets are available on the door.

Rev'd George Beverly, the chaplain at King's School, Bruton is due to be ordained priest on 25 June. Please pray for George and for the continuing flourishing of his contribution to God's ministry.

Thank you to Jill and Alistair Pearce who have offered to help with occasional copying and assembling of documents in the Benefice Office – very welcome extra hands!

St Mary's, Bruton is due to host a concert given by the Tenor Gregory Steward, who will sing a selection of romantic songs and popular favourites. Tickets can be bought in advance from the pharmacy on Bruton High Street or on the door and are priced at £10 and include an interval drink. The concert begins at 7.30pm.

PLATINUM JUBILEE

Each parish celebrated the Queen's Jubilee over the course of the special holiday weekend. Shepton Montague lit a magnificent beacon on Thursday evening, and there were fireworks at Hauser & Wirth in Bruton. The lucky ones had their street parties before the rain came on Sunday afternoon, the unlucky ones either got wet or adapted. We supplemented our Pentecost services with some extra prayers for the Queen and the choir at Bruton gave a memorable rendition of Handel's coronation anthem, 'Zadok the priest', from which the resident bats are still recovering.

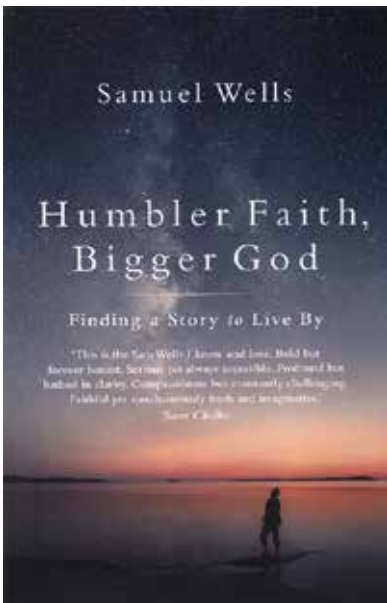


Queen Elizabeth II



Jubilee Celebrations in Pitcombe. Photo: Charles Brook

DISCUSSION GROUP



Humbler Faith, Bigger God by Sam Wells

We will be resuming our discussion group, this time based on Sam Wells' new book 'Humbler Faith, Bigger God', which considers some of the most common objections to the Christian faith and proposes some responses. Some notes will be provided to prompt our discussion. We will aim to meet weekly on Monday evenings, starting at 6.00pm. The first meeting will be on Monday 13 June. The venue will be decided when we have a feel for likely numbers. Please let the Rector know if you would like to be part of this, as together we explore and deepen our faith.

'SHARED LOCAL MINISTRY'

As has been mentioned in previous issues of this Newsletter, the Diocese is considering how to respond to falling income from the parishes across the Diocese, as many do not pay their Parish Share in full, with the result that the Diocese suffers a deficit in its budget. One key proposal is to reduce the number of stipendiary clergy. We have now been informed that we must come up with proposals for a way to reduce the number of stipendiary clergy in this Deanery (that is, the Bruton and Cary Deanery, comprising 10 benefices) from the current 8.5 down to 7. So, we have to see how we can shape our ministry in a way that does not depend as much on stipendiary clergy. Our ministry is, of course, already shared between stipendiary clergy and other people – retired clergy, a few paid staff, and many volunteers – across a whole range of our activities. But if we are to reduce the number of hours that stipendiary clergy devote to ministry in any given parish, we need to work out how we will respond, and what would have to change.

There will be a meeting of Deanery Synod at North Barrow Village Hall on Wednesday 8 June at 7.30pm to discuss these issues. All are invited to attend that meeting, not just elected members of Deanery Synod. The way in which we respond to these proposals could have profound implications on our shared life together as God's church in this place. Do please participate in these discussions by attending the meeting and/or making your views known to your churchwardens or the Rector. Thank you to those who have already done so. The Benefice Council has already met to discuss these issues and a written response to the Diocese is being prepared.

BENEFICE SERVICES

At the moment, when there is a 5th Sunday in the month, we have been holding a single service on that Sunday morning at 11.00 am at St Mary's, Bruton, to which all in the Benefice are encouraged to come. It seems that this is not a good idea, as the service is not well supported. In the past, the Benefice service was not always held at St Mary's but rotated around the Benefice. It was no better supported then.

The idea behind holding a single service for the whole Benefice on these few occasions each year is to try to remind ourselves that we are not members of our own individual parish churches (the Church of England has no concept of membership in that sense), but are all part of a single Church that is global. It is also intended to be an opportunity to get to know one another better, enjoy worship in greater numbers, encourage one another and share thoughts and ideas relating to the life of the parishes. But it is not working, and now is the time to face up to that and think again.

So please consider why it is that you do not attend the regular 5th Sunday benefice service (if you are among the majority who do not come) and let the Rector (or your churchwardens) know.

There are of course many possible reasons – the time of the service, the need for transport, the style of the service. But possibly (probably?) a major reason, if you are one of those who does not come, is that you only like to attend church in your 'own' church. This sense of belonging to our local parish church lies at the heart of Anglicanism, especially in rural areas; the support we give to our local parish church is why it still exists and why it survives through times of adversity. It is a good thing.

Yet an unwillingness to worship other than in our preferred place, at our preferred time and in our preferred way jeopardises our unity and we risk becoming isolated. Also, it is likely (though of course not inevitable – see above in relation to Shared Local Ministry) that the number of services we will be able to offer across the Benefice will reduce in the future if our congregations continue to reduce in size and if the number of clergy reduces, as is proposed. If we only attend church when there is a service in our 'own' church, or a service of a style that we prefer, then we will end up attending church less and less frequently. That jeopardises our faith.

So it is important that, as small and dispersed church communities, we come together once in a while in a way that is good, sustaining and encouraging. If the current practice of celebrating the Eucharist together at St Mary's does not achieve this (as it clearly doesn't), and simply moving the service around the Benefice does not work either (as it didn't in the past) then please think about what would do so, from your perspective, and let the Rector (or your churchwardens) know.

BRUTON FETE

The planned Community Jubilee Fete in Bruton was cancelled due to an inability to secure enough of the necessary equipment and a shortage of stallholders and other helpers. We are now planning to put together a fete to be held on 16 July, so please make a note of that date and consider whether you are able to help in any way.

DIARY DATES

- 8 June – Open meeting of Deanery Synod, North Barrow Village Hall at 7.30 pm
- 9 June – Moviola at St Peter's, Shepton Montague at 7.30 pm
- 10 June – Gregory Steward in concert at St Mary's Bruton at 7.30 pm
- 11 June – Bo Lee and Workman exhibition at St Peter's, Redlynch closes
- 13 June – 'Humbler faith, bigger God' discussion group begins at 6.00 pm, venue tbc
- 14 June – Archdeacon's Visitations, All Saints, Castle Cary at 7.00 pm
- 16 June– Corpus Christi Eucharist, St Mary's, Bruton at 6.30 pm
- 18 June– wedding, St Mary's, Bruton at 12.00 noon
- 25 June – wedding, St Mary's, Bruton at 1.00 pm
- 26 June – baptism, St Mary's, Bruton at 1.00 pm

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