



“In Touch” Issue no. 10 November 2016



This will be the last of my ‘yellow letters’. The first, in April 2012, launched our parish vision:

Church Vision Statement: Our vision is for St. Mary’s to be a growing church, whose welcome, in Christ’s name, extends to all. Furthermore, that St. Mary’s will express this in buildings that are well-used and open to the fullest extent, offering modern and traditional worship that meets the needs of people now, with an active social life for all age groups, nurturing people who know the power of Christ in their lives, and expressing our faith in God by service to our community and the wider world.

In our MAP we set out three key priorities for our church for 2012-2017, which were endorsed by the PCC. I hope you still have these ‘In Touch’ somewhere, but I shall leave a folder of them in church so you can refresh your memory should you wish to. We have made some changes to try to address these priorities:

1. **To make more of our Worship attractive... to families, including those of little church background.** We changed our service pattern in Epiphany 2013, seeking to create a balance between traditional worship on weeks 2 and 4 each month, and less formal, more all-age focussed in weeks 1 and 3. The singing group and the Signing Group at First Sunday are much appreciated, and help to create a worshipful and joyful atmosphere. We have followed different themes each year, including Biblical characters, parables and the Christian saints.

Our choir is dedicated, and many people have told me how much they enjoy what is offered. We have introduced different hymns, and various settings for the Eucharist. They give their time for God’s worship, as do our other musicians, and these are significant gifts in our church. Similarly our bells ring out each week to proclaim the worship of Christ our Lord, and our dedicated bell ringers maintain this witness as parish church to Goldington.

I think most people would like to see more done to attract children and families, particularly to the third Sunday which needs more development and advertising.

2. **To open up St Mary’s to the local community, to offer support and pastoral care, so that more ‘come in’ and more of us ‘get out’ into the local community.** In 2013 we responded to an appeal from the Foodbank office at Brickhill church and opened a branch here in Goldington. This has continued to serve clients and my thanks to all those church members who have been involved, and to other members of GCT who also now sustain it.

I have chaired the ‘Golden Gardens’ community scheme, which has won many awards over the years, and a number of church members have played a part in it. Golden Gardens have helped at church fetes, done events with Goldington Tots and the Guides, hosted annual community Christmas carol services, and even an Easter morning barbecue! It’s a great place to meet people, some of whom rarely come to church. St Mary’s church name appears alongside BPHA and Tesco in advertising. This needs more church people to help, and I hope that may be part of your thinking in the future.

We opened the church on weekdays in school hours, and Katherine and I were proud to donate a votive candle stand, in memory of my parents, for people to light candles as a prayer for someone on their hearts. We have a lovely new hospitality area in the west end of the church (and thanks to all those who donated money, did fundraising and supervised the project). We have transformed the outside of the west door so that our church looks good and ‘open for business’ from Church Lane. Soon we shall replace the old metal grill on the north door with modern, attractive glass and wooden doors which will proclaim our welcome to people coming to our building.

3. **To develop what is on offer at St Mary's, so we increase the church family, and attract and retain new people** Jackie, Ben, the Lay Leaders and Readers and I have worked to put on a variety of different services. We have had hundreds of children through the church through the Easter Story Trail, and subsequent Easter experiences for schools. School groups are happy to come to St Mary's and use the mini-vestments donated by a church member. We have seen some of our wedding couples remain to worship with us, and help out with church activities, and our thanks to them for enriching our lives. Ben and I are governors at Putnoe and Goldington Green Academies respectively, other church members are involved in local schools, while younger church members are involved in leadership of the Beavers and the Guides, who use our church hall.

Ben has put on 'Film and Theology' evenings, and he and I have run Pilgrim courses aimed particularly at our younger married couples. Some of you have helped us with activities for youth and mums and tots. These latter did not, sadly, attract the numbers to be able to continue but it was right to try; thanks to all who helped, and do not lose heart: not everything will prosper everywhere.

Knit and Natter has been a great success, and this, and bowls, fellowship meetings, walks and breakfast groups all give people places to engage socially with others. Well done to all those who organise and lead these. They are part of 'being church' too.

An interregnum is always a time of challenge, as people feel uncertain about the future. But it is also a time of opportunity. It's not just about us. It's about God and us: all the difference in the world. I sought God's guidance on what to give you from the scriptures. He directed me to Philippians 4 v. 5-7, and it's where I point you for this time:

"Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (New International Version)

Please heed this. In your reflections, do not argue, but carefully listen to all voices - carefully, lovingly, and not just the loud ones. All have something to contribute: the newest as well as the faithful old-stagers, those seemingly 'at the margins' as well as those 'at the centre of things.' Please consider the future, not just glorifying the past, pray together, and continue to build a church family, for that can be a wonderful and resilient community where all can find welcome.

With my love and prayers for your future journey with God.

Richard