

## Vicar's Report 2011

It was only a year ago when I took up the role of vicar for this parish. In some ways it feels like longer, and in others I wonder where the time has gone.

What I have been delighted to discover is how committed so many people are to the church of St Martin's. We are blessed with two terrific churchwardens in Bob and Helen. Since I'm still rather new to being a vicar, and this is the first APCM I've ever chaired, I consulted a book called 'An ABC for the PCC.' The section on churchwardens stated that in addition to their legal duties churchwardens often 'have an unofficial pastoral role for the congregation (and for parishioners too).' Helen and Bob have worked on their 'spiritual' and 'parks and gardens' roles tirelessly throughout the year, and they have also provided care for people throughout this village, care which is very much appreciated. In this task of pastoral care they are joined by Jan Glascodine, who delivers cards and flowers on behalf of the church, and Margaret Roper, who is part of the Healing Ministry team.

Because we are a small church, we have a small PCC, and I am well aware that this means that much work is done by a few people. I rely upon members of the PCC to advise me when I propose new initiatives or changes to how we worship at St Martin's. It's a funny old business, the way the Church of England goes about getting vicars for parishes. I'm always conscious that all of you were here before I came and, God willing, will still be here when I eventually leave. I rely on the PCC to let me know when I might be taking 'that one step too far,' although I also hope that they—and you—recognise that sometimes bold steps have to be taken.

It's always dangerous to thank people, for fear of leaving someone out. But here goes. I would like to record our thanks to Cliff Mortimer, who proves that organists can be cheerful and willing. Our sidespeople are the essential welcoming faces at services. There are many people who mow the churchyard and clean inside, many who don't worship with us regularly but who, quite rightly, feel that this place also belongs to them. I add my thanks to those offered by the churchwardens to all these people. Harold Thompson ensures that we have bellringers for weddings and also does a lot of work setting up and clearing away after services. I am amazed by the beauty of the flower arrangements which we enjoy on Sundays. And I value having people serving at the Eucharist and offering the chalice. To me that is a visual reminder that Communion is celebrated by the priest and the people together.

The work of a PCC secretary requires planning and preparation, and I'm pleased that we have the very capable Susan Addams in this position. And Anthony Addams works equally hard as Treasurer. He drove forward the fund raising for our repairs, and should also be commended for his diligence in writing letters of thanks to those who contribute to church funds.

I wouldn't have accepted the position of vicar at St Martin's if I hadn't been happy with the way you worship already. Having said that, I have introduced a few changes. I am keen to make sure that anyone new through our doors can follow the service, which is why we will be having a new liturgy booklet—with larger print! We also have the Guides joining us three times a year and those services will continue to be without Communion. I still would like to see a new hymn book, but I realise that this has to wait whilst we continue essential maintenance work on the church building. I recognise that even in a small worshipping community such as ours not everyone will like the same thing, and no doubt some people simply endure rather than enjoy the changes. If you are one of those, I thank you for your endurance.

We have had a number of new faces over the course of the year. I would like to thank the regular congregation for accepting baptisms in the main Sunday service. I believe this makes an important point that baptism isn't some private event just for friends and family, but a public event which marks the entry into the Christian community. We also continue to have a small number of weddings. There were six in Welton last year, and at the moment four are planned for this year.

As you are aware I am not only vicar here, but I also have other responsibilities in the Daventry team. This year has seen a dramatic rise in the number of church weddings, so I am often in other team churches on a Saturday. The team has also handled a large number of funerals this year. The work load should ease when Sarah Brown joins us as Team Vicar at Braunston and Ashby. The third part of my role is taking forward the team's work with children and young people. I head up a team of lay people who deliver assemblies into all of the community schools in the Daventry area. I have also delivered three assemblies into William Parker School, usually using video clips from 'Doctor Who,' and I hope the work I'm doing with the Guides here in Welton might branch out into work with the Daventry Guides.

I think it's human nature to always want a bit more than what we have. We would all like to have more families with us on Sunday mornings, more people to take on the many tasks needed to keep St Martin's open and welcoming. I can be as impatient as anyone! But I also think we have much to celebrate. We have a great faithfulness in this church, a faithfulness in worship and a faithfulness in service to this parish. I look forward to working with you all for another year as we seek to discern how God is calling us to serve him in this part of his kingdom.