

# Our Benefice Vision *for 2019 and beyond...*

God is good! In 2018, all of our churches have experienced times when it was standing room only; when church or hall was filled to bursting with local people having an amazing or moving time. Our season of renewal began, quite rightly, on Easter Day when over 70 people came to church to celebrate our risen Lord, and it continued through a delightful Pentecost Songs of Praise and Songs for a Summer Evening, a bumper harvest, poignant All Souls and WW1 100 Remembrance (when 300+ villagers came to church), and on to Christmas.



COMMUNITY CHOIR LAUNCH



Our Christmas Coffee Mornings drew in record numbers of villagers, and were buzzing with seasonal goodwill and friendship; countless mince pies were consumed. At our carol services, Messy Christingles, Midnight Mass and Christmas Day Communion, we welcomed 400 villagers.

It is impossible to cover all the good news from last year. What were your favourite memories of church life in 2018?



In 2019, we want to build on the success of our 2018 Special Services and Festivals, and our social events, and offer a Christ-like welcome to more and more villagers. We will continue to invite our villagers and school families to key services and social events. We also want to build on the outreach links that we have formed through our choir, and with our local schools, the new houses being built in Overstone, Mums and Tots, Street Church, Air Scouts, Royal British Legion, the Riding for the Disabled, and more besides.

## What we have planned for 2019...

### a) Festivals and Seasonal Services

Building on the 2018 pattern of services, the key additions and changes in 2019 will be:

- ✝ Ash Wednesday - 7.30pm Holy Communion *with* Ashes, supported by the benefice choir (Mears Ashby - 6/3/2019)
- ✝ Maundy Thursday - 7.30pm Holy Communion *with* Vigil (Mears Ashby - 18/4/2019). We will alternate this with an Agape Meal at Overstone.
- ✝ Good Friday - The Walk of Witness will be replaced by Messy Easter (10am at Overstone Church - 19/4/2019), and will be followed as usual at Hardwick by the Soup Lunch (12.30pm) and Hour before the Cross (2pm).

- ✝ Continuing our usual alternating pattern: Sywell will host this year's 10.45am Remembrance Service and 11.30pm Midnight Mass.

The 4 Villages Community Choir will lead the singing at key services, and - hopefully - at a Songs of Praise and/or Summer Concert to be arranged at Beckworths.

Messy Church has successfully attracted families with young children. In 2019, we will host four Messy Churches.

- ✝ Good Friday 19 April 2019 - 10am Messy Easter (Overstone)
- ✝ Sunday 16 June 2019 - 11am Messy Fathers' Day *with* Bacon Butties (Sywell Village Hall)
- ✝ Sunday 22 September 2019 - 11am Messy Harvest (in the hall at Sywell CEVA Primary School)
- ✝ Christmas Eve - 4pm Messy Christingles (Overstone)

With the funding nearly in place, we are looking forward to hosting a BIG celebration in the autumn at Sywell Church. It would be great to have a "flying" bishop come and bless the new lead roofs and alarm!

### **Sunday and Mid-Week Services**

With our main Sunday services working well, ideas that we would like to explore in the year ahead are:

- ★ Mid-week services: Identify who might like to come to a service in the week (daytime and/or evening), and how we might invite relevant villagers to church.
- ★ Evening services: Look at how we might we reach out to those who are seeking God by offering creative / reflective evening services. For example: Taizé, Prayer Stations, Table Talk and/or Outdoor Church.

As well as feeding our own spirituality, the aim would be to provide one-off and regular services that appeal to families with school-age children, adults of all-ages, and daytime residents of our villages.

### **Nurturing our faith**

To help us on our journeys of faith and nurture those who have started to come to church (e.g. Messy Church), in 2019, we would like to offer:

- ✝ A 3-Session Lent Course: 7.30pm on Wednesday evenings (Hardwick - 13 March, 27 March and 10 April)
- ✝ A Nurture Course for seasonal and occasional worshippers, including a meal or refreshments. This might be Emmaus, Pilgrim, Alpha or a diocesan designed course. Ideally, we'd like to run one in Mears Ashby and one in Sywell / Overstone.
- ✝ Prayers Triplets across the benefice for those who'd like to meet with church friends for a time of sharing and praying.

### **Being open and welcoming churches**

In 2019, we will become even more welcoming and supportive as village churches by:

- ★ Hosting coffee mornings at Sywell, building on the success of the Christmas Coffee Morning (thank you, Sharon).
- ★ Opening our churches during the daytime in summer, and at weekends in winter (Hardwick and Sywell - post-roofs).
- ★ Hosting an open meeting with refreshments in Overstone to explore how residents feel about their church and how we can be there for them.

*Please hold our Vision and plans for 2019 in your prayers. Whilst we may sow the seeds, it is God who makes them grow.*