

Rev Louise Alder - Vicar's report for 2016 meeting

Being the parish Priest of Hellesdon, is challenging, engaging, tough, painful, exciting and exhausting. Each day is a combination of all these in various measures. There are days when I have no idea why God has asked me to serve in this parish, and I feel that I have done nothing but deal with paper work, and ridiculous tasks. There are days when I have a real sense of this is what God wants me to do as I use the gifts he has given me in his service. Being your Parish Priest I want to share with you this evening some of the highs and lows of this year as I believe that in all things as Christians we are called to be honest with each other, sharing our joys and our sorrows.

During the course of each month there is time spent with Bex nurturing our young families at Caterpillars and Butterflies and seeing their numbers grow. There are assemblies and school work with Heather Avenue Infant, Kinsale Infant, Kinsale Junior, Fireside Junior and Valley Primary, supporting the outreach work of our Open Doors coffee morning meeting with some of the older members of our community and Family activity morning. Time spent with families preparing for baptism and couples preparing for weddings continues to be a source of immense privilege as they allow me as the church representative into the life of their family and hear of God's love.

One of the many joys this year which also brings a loss is the continued development of Authorized Worship Assistants. Having this wonderful team of lay people leading worship and helping to develop other spiritual areas in the life of our church meant a sharing in ministry, a letting go which at times has been hard.

There was that wonderful weekend of working together not only as churches but as a community as we worked with the Parish Council to mark our Queen's 90th birthday. An opportunity to celebrate with those who were 90 in the same year, a community concert with church members providing cake and serving interval refreshments and then our parish indoor picnic due to weather and a service of celebration and thanksgiving.

Coming together to worship as the people of God here in Hellesdon has been of great support and encouragement to many of us during the year. To stand before a congregation of 60 to 70 people, to join with all those voices in praising God, to remember our Lord's sacrifice and we share bread and wine together, is very moving and often over whelming. Unity leads to strength, and in our present time and culture, anything that's demonstrates unity needs to be seen as a blessing for us and one with potential for others. I recognize in this blessing, that for some, not always worshipping in their own church has been difficult to deal with, and has led to a degree of tension, and sometimes hurt for you and for me. I hope and pray that as we move forward this will gradually diminish and that we can all come together in remembrance of all our Lord has done for us.

There have been changes in our attendance numbers over the last year. Some people have moved away, others believed that God was calling them to worship elsewhere. I have found this difficult, for in a number of these cases the move has

come with a personal comment on my ministry among you, and sadly we have had a number of deaths of much loved members of both our churches. This has meant for me not just the loss of those I admire and have found encouraging but the tough part and privilege of conducting their funeral service. But it is not just about loss, we have had new people join the family, and that's exciting.

Four months into 2017 always seems a strange point to be looking forward, but I do so now with excitement and hope for positive things. Following on from our Lent prayers we will be looking at how we can continue to offer some of these ways of engaging with God in to the future. We look forward to the completion of the restoration work on St Mary's porch and the next stage in the development of this site here at St Paul's. We look forward to our continued and growing involvement with our local community, through schools, outreach projects, community groups and personal opportunities. But above all we look forward to our continued growing relationship with our heavenly Father as we serve him no matter how hard that may be at times, here in Hellesdon, in the place he has called each one of us to be.