

Hatley St George church

2018 / 2019 annual report

This is my first report to Hatley Parish Council as Parish Priest, and comes with my apologies I am unable to attend the Annual Meeting, though I hope, if invited, to come to a regular meeting at some stage

I am going to start with an explanation of the current situation, which, having been in post since August 2018, I realise is not clear to everyone – quite understandably!

I am currently designated 'Priest in Charge' pending possible future arrangements linking, in some way not yet defined, 'my' parishes with the Gransdens group. When that new arrangement is settled, I will become Rector, as my predecessors were. (Ask me, if you are interested, what the titles Vicar, Rector, Reverend, Priest in Charge mean – in many ways it isn't important to what I do and how we work, but there is a rationale). I will not be working on my own, I hasten to add!

Hatley St George Church (we think dedicated to St James the Great, but often referred to as St George's) is now, technically, a Chapel of Ease in the Ecclesiastical parish of 'Gamlingay and the Hatleys', which in turn is part of the 'Benefice of Gamlingay and Everton'. A Benefice is the responsibility of one priest.

Also in the Parish is the redundant church of St Denis, now in the care of the Friends of Friendless Churches, although the surrounding churchyard, a designated nature reserve, is still 'open', i.e. burials are possible and are under the jurisdiction of the parish priest and Parochial Church Council.

Responsibilities

The effect on the ground of the leadership and governance arrangements currently in place in these Church of England parishes is:

- I, as priest of the Benefice, have responsibility for all C-of-E matters in the communities I serve. This includes:
 - Three church buildings (Hatley St George, Gamlingay and Everton)
 - Three churchyards – St Denis, Hatley St George, Everton
 - (Currently) two Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) – elected and appointed ex-officio bodies of which members are trustees of the charity each PCC constitutes. These are 'Gamlingay with the Hatleys' and 'Everton cum Tetworth'. Everton is small, enabling it to work well as a separate parish, or joining it in, is a key task for me at the moment.
 - All the baptisms, church weddings and funerals, including funerals at the Crematorium unless families wish otherwise, across the Benefice.

This range of responsibilities indicates the way in which the Church of England is changing. Because the C-of-E is 'established' and therefore its rules are often 'law of the land', the changes can be piece-meal because what would be good is not technically easy to make happen.

The upshot is fewer ordained people are responsible for more parishes (and their churches), particularly in rural areas, which is often resented by the villages where there is no longer a paid priest with sole responsibility. The Church (people, not buildings) is evolving into an organisation where there is much more sharing of tasks and clergy are called on to be team leaders rather than sole operators.

This means although I still have responsibility for what would once had been done by three people, I am not expected to do all that needs to be done by myself and in the way it used to be – even if I am, that's not going to work.

Can you help please?

SO – I'm looking for people to work with, and enormously grateful for those of you I have already begun to get to know and who have been so supportive. People of faith or not, who care about the heritage of our communities, are most welcome as fellow-workers.

So far at the Hatleys we have:

- Celebrated the great Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter in Hatley St George church with well-attended services (considering the size of the communities).
- Held regular communion services (usually twice a month), both Book of Common Prayer pattern and the newer Common Worship.
- Enjoyed community time at the Hatley Coffee Morning (I can't get to all of them).
- Instigated Mothering Sunday celebration and Easter breakfast at the Village Hall, which have been greatly enjoyed by those who attended.
- Celebrated a wedding (just before I arrived) and conducted a church funeral and an ashes interment at Hatley St George and a burial at St Denis'.
- Visited St Denis' churchyard and seen inside the building, thinking towards how that space can be well used within the rules governing its use.

To do:

- Establish sustainable care of the Hatley St George church building and contents – needs an externally funded project, which in turn needs someone to lead it.
- Establish (a survey of the Benefice is in planning) and work to provide the best for the worship needs of this small community, within the context of the changes taking place around us.

The great resource is people – their time and interests the limiting factors. If you want to be involved, and especially if you can see a way to help with the 'to do' list, please get in touch! My contact details are 01767 650 587 / hilaryafyoung@gmail.com.

Anything you are good at and can offer could be more useful than you think.

Hilary Young, Priest in Charge, 21st May 2019

St Mary's, Gamlingay, website: www.gamlingaychurch.co.uk.