

A few words from the Vicar

For God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you have showed for his sake. (Hebrews 6:10)

Well, at the time of writing, there is still no news regarding the proposed Ainsworth and Radcliffe Team. Hopefully I will be in a position to report some progress next month – although I realise I said that last month!

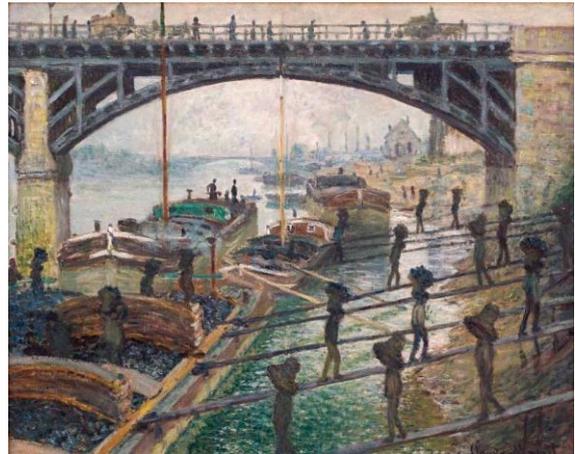
For those of you who are not sure what is meant by a 'team ministry' (I suspect quite a few), a team ministry is a formal grouping of parishes that collaborate together in mission and ministry across the whole of their combined area. This means that, should the proposed team go ahead, Ainsworth will remain a separate parish but will work closely with the other three parishes (St Andrew's, St Thomas & St John's and St Mary's).

Each parish will have a nominated member of the clergy team responsible for them. I fully expect to remain responsible for Ainsworth but, as teams share clergy (we will be licensed to the team rather than a parish), I will also exercise my ministry in all the other parishes too. Additionally, the other team clergy will be expected to minister in this parish. So, to avoid disappointment, your expectations of me and what I do in this parish will need to change.

Currently, apart from the very small proportion of my time I devote to the Bury Town Centre Chaplaincy, my time is almost entirely spent ministering within this parish. Should the team go ahead, you will get considerably less of my time – probably about 50%. Although, depending upon the outcome of discussions about the number of staff to be allocated to the team, you might expect a further input of about 25% from the other clergy appointed to the team.

I know I have said this before but it is worth saying again because I am not sure everyone understands the implications of what the future holds for us. The fact is, whatever the outcome of the discussions, sooner or later this parish will be sharing its vicar with another parish or parishes. This is the logical outcome of the decline nationally in the number of stipendiary clergy deployable to parishes. So, the alternative to our becoming part of an Ainsworth and Radcliffe team ministry is not staying as we are, but you sharing your vicar in a different way to that being proposed currently.

From my experience – an experience no doubt shared by many of you – corporate reorganisations are intended to drive improvements in efficiency and effectiveness; people are pushed to work both harder and smarter. Most clergy (me included) already work in excess of 60 hours a week, so my working an 120 hour week in order to make up the



Claude MONET, 'The Coal Workers' (1875)

shortfall in my time (should this parish end up with a 50% share in me) is a physical impossibility. Indeed, I am not prepared to even consider going there!

So you and I need to work smarter.

For a start, Manchester Diocese and the Church of England nationally have come to the realisation that frontline clergy and parish officers are overburdened by administration and are planning to cut red tape. I sincerely hope they have more success than all the politicians over the years who have promised to do the same with Government red tape!

Working smarter will also mean providing admin support to team clergy and handing over to lay volunteers some of the tasks we perform. There is a small grant available from the Diocese to pay towards the cost of employing an administrator following parish reorganisations and your parish representatives on the steering group (including me) have been pushing for the team to make use of it. And how I wish we had the money to pay for a Verger!

We are fortunate in that we are building up a ministry team and the ministries exercised by Venitia, Debra and Elaine will partly offset the reduction in my availability. Nonetheless we need to grow the ministry team further and many more vocations are required to authorised lay and ordained ministries (e.g. Readers, Ordained local Ministers and Authorised Local Ministers). So let's keep praying about this!

We are also fortunate in that many of you already give up your time to support the ministry of the church – God's Mission – in this parish, so I hope I have not given the impression that nobody else does any work around here. The fact is, I know and fully appreciate that we could not achieve what we are achieving already without all the sterling work that goes on. In fact, this is one of the impressive things about our Church. So keep up the good work!

Indeed, this year we celebrate our 500th anniversary and we would not have lasted 5 minutes never mind 500 years without all the hard work that has been put in over the centuries. Well, in the new situation we are facing we will need more of the same.

Every Blessing

Dave