

A few words from the Vicar

*Like a mighty tortoise, moves the Church of God
Brothers, we're treading, where we've often trod
We are much divided, many bodies we
Having different doctrines, but not much charity.
(From a spoof of 'Onward Christian Soldiers')*

Well, after a few months of having no progress to report regarding the proposed Ainsworth & Radcliffe Team, I now have something significant to share with you.

And it's good news!

Bishop David has given his approval for the proposed Team to be supported initially by three stipendiary (i.e. full time paid) clergy. He has also agreed that Revd Elizabeth Binns can stay as a non-stipendiary (i.e. part time unpaid) Team Vicar within the Team.

Taking into account the fact that the 'staff team' will also include five licensed Readers (three from St Andrew's and two from Ainsworth) plus our very own Revd Elaine newly licensed to this parish as an Ordained Local Minister (OLM), it is clear that the proposed Ainsworth & Radcliffe Team will be well resourced.

Yet it is always good to have more Readers, OLMs and other licensed ministers. The more the merrier, in fact. We have been praying for vocations for some time now and, in the knowledge that God answers prayer, if you feel God might be calling you, pluck up courage and have a word with me.

Eventually it is expected that the Team's allocation of stipendiary clergy will be reduced to two. So the initial allocation of three stipendiaries to the Team provides us with much needed breathing space for more of you to come forward in answer to God's call.

And in that regard, please continue to pray for Debra who will be attending a Bishops' Advisory Panel later this month. This will determine whether she is selected for ordination training.

Personally speaking, Bishop David's decision also means I can be more optimistic than I was last month about the proportion of my time that will be available for ministry in this parish.

Nonetheless, please be under no illusion that things will remain as they are now. The four parishes will be expected to work together in mission as a team. Also, whilst I hope to remain as the nominated minister responsible for Christ Church, I will be expected to exercise my ministry and lead worship in all four parishes – and the other stipendiaries will be expected to do the same.

I am sure there will be other ways in which my ministry and the life of this Church will change, but I'll leave it there for now. The important thing is that you understand that there are changes on the horizon (assuming the proposed Team goes ahead).

Indeed, things are changing already. For example, I have been nominated to serve as a Governor at St Andrew's Primary School. Also, Revd Elaine and I have led worship at St Andrew's and we will continue to do so. However, this is no longer about providing cover because they have no vicar (there are retired vicars who can do that for them) but rather so that the congregation at St Andrew's can get to know us and we them.

With that in mind, I have agreed some dates with St Andrew's and you can expect me to be missing from some of our 10.30am services later this Summer!

The Church of England moves slowly – it has been likened to a mighty tortoise – so I have no idea how long it will take before the Radcliffe & Ainsworth Team is formed and fully operational. Having worked as a manager before opting to go

stipendiary and having experience of a few change management projects, I had assumed the Team would be up and running by now – changes happen faster in business! Obviously I was wrong, so I have no intention of suggesting a timetable to you in this article.

Your guess is as good as mine.

What I can say, however, is we can expect the pace of Team formation to quicken from now on. So, please continue to pray about this, for all four PCCs and the Steering Group. Pray for God's guidance as we take decisions that affect all our futures.

Every Blessing

Dave