

## **Haldon Team Ministry Report 2020**

Inevitably, most of the last calendar year was re-orientated in a COVID precautionary direction. The hallmark of the Pandemic to date has been learning and digesting what we couldn't do, dating back to the government closure of places of worship as of March 2020 for a season. However, it has been to the credit of the Haldon Team – all those work with us – that we have 'mined' the art of the possible since then.

Those of us who were technologically adept had to speedily become more so: being able to film, edit and repeatedly master 'Zoom' became second nature. On Zoom, for example, we've held PCC, Pastoral Group, Team & Extended Team meetings; coffee gatherings. In 2020, the telephone came into its own for a weekly prayer meeting & very early on in the Pandemic, a Team network of weekly phone callers. Keeping community networks in place has also been managed through monthly mailings to those not online; the emailed weekly Team newsletter – thank you, Team administrator, Mervyn, for this and so much else; regular Team website updates; online magazines & circular messaging from Ideford, Luton & neighbouring hamlets, Bishopsteignton & St Michael's Teignmouth.

Going online for Sunday worship on a weekly basis has proved to be a significant way of building Team identity while respecting the sense of place by framing services from a specific community has been equally important. It's been possible to exercise our creative muscles too in this context: 'Blessing of the Boats'; Sunrise Holy Communion; Songs of Praise not forgetting Revd Sue Astbury's brown boots have all been virtual highlights along the way. We've been interested to note people have joined us virtually from other parts of the country & other parts of the world, occasionally!

In the midst of this whirlwind of a year, in July, Team rector Roderick Withnell retired – not in a context he would have chosen – but bells, cake, bubbly & a socially distanced beach farewell for both Claire & Roderick were all successfully managed.

As Team churches went through periods of opening & closure, bell-ringing was impaired by stringent ringing regulations and singing largely evaporated although the choir at St Michael's took any Church of England guideline opportunity to re-form and the clergy encouraged singing outside on church land when permitted to do so. Remember 'Hark the Herald' at Christmas?

Extraordinarily, certain physical endeavours found a way to flourish: Open Studios & cream teas at Luton were held; plant, marmalade & Christmas craft sales 'flowered'; in September, a physical Team monthly prayer meeting 'birthed' itself - 'First Things First'; Advent was marked by a Teignmouth procession culminating in a service of light in the darkness at St Michael's; carol services reworked themselves as a 'Haldon Team Service of Music & Readings for Christmas', accommodating gifts from the communities in which they were held. In fact, Christmas created a ripple of creativity across the Team. In Ideford, the Advent Calendar Window trail was a whole village enterprise and there were opportunities to purchase masks made of Christmas fabric; there were walk through nativities in Teignmouth & Bishopsteignton, drawing in all age participants; raising money for the Children's Society - building bridges with one of the local pubs in Bishop's case and recruiting newborn Elijah to star as infant Jesus, with his Mum.

Significantly, a number of Team churches, including Ashcombe, decided that opening for Private Prayer on set days on a weekly basis was a hopeful way to build a bridge with their communities. It also enable some to access familiar spaces that they felt unable to attend for public worship because of the level of risk they perceived there to be.

In the course of this roller coaster ride, life events such as baptisms, weddings & funerals featured when possible. The constraints on gathering have been taxing at times and many have borne too much in context they would not have chosen so it was heart-lifting to close 2020 with a small Team wedding in Bishopsteignton just before receptions became out of the question again.

Reflecting again on such a corporate journey, I am very aware how grateful I am for all the Team work. I have been especially appreciative of so much self-expenditure on the part of the retired clergy, the Readers and the Revd Sue Astbury whose fellow-travelling has been invaluable.

And finally, it's been really heartening to witness the tolerance of adapting to changed service patterns; the generosity exercised within and between Team communities; the initiative of all who continue to make the art of the possible, a reality in the Haldon Team Communities. So, whoever you are, thank you!

Revd Jane