

New Benefice News

Issue 3

25th April 2023

Please find below news of the recent work of the “Formation Team” in preparing for the new benefice:

- Plans for the “New Benefice Vision Day” are now finalised. This will take place on Saturday 29th April at Ditchingham Village Hall from 10am. Approximately thirty people have signed up to say that they are going to attend from across the whole new benefice. We hope that this day will provide us with the opportunity to listen to God and to one another as we consider the shape and mission of the new benefice. A simple lunch will be provided and there will be times of worship and for socialising, as well as working together to seek a sense of direction.
- There have been some applications for Baptisms in the benefice and this prompted a discussion about how these will be arranged. Lynn’s feeling, which was shared by the group, is that the best place for Baptisms to happen is during a “main” Sunday service, ideally not Holy Communion for most families, and this has been the practice throughout her time in the Brooke Benefice. Congregation members have really enjoyed welcoming children and their families to church and it has been encouraging to include them and their guests in worship and to maintain contact with them as they grow. We talked about how this might be achieved with the reduction in priests in the benefice and our proposed service pattern, which aims to offer a variety of worship on most Sundays, both geographically and in terms of style. It was decided, for the moment, that Lynn will make adjustments to the service rota so that baptisms can take place at a 10.30am service, led by her, in the church that has been requested by the parents. Like everything else in our new benefice this will be an experiment and will be reviewed over time to see how it is working for families and for our church family too.
- We know that many of you are excited about visiting the many churches across our benefice and so we have made the first moves towards holding “Open Churches” afternoons. There are two dates for this: Saturday 8th July and Sunday 16th July. Plans are in the early stages but we hope that some of our churches will be “open” on each day for visits and perhaps a cup of tea. Look out for more details in coming weeks and remember that all our churches are open for visitors every day, so you can start exploring whenever you are ready.
- The Team have also been thinking about communication and rationalising the ways in which we communicate across the new benefice. Those of you in the Hempnall Group may have already noticed some presentational changes to your weekly e-mail and we hope soon that one e-mail, generated from the Office, will go to everyone across the new benefice. Discussions are also taking place about the way in which “Thoughts and Prayers”, a weekly publication in the Hempnall Group, might best be adjusted for everyone and, in due course, attention will be given to the various bi-/monthly magazines that communicate with our wider communities.

Since our last “New Benefice News” Lynn has been licensed as Priest-in-Charge of the Hempnall Team Ministry, maintaining her licence as Priest-in-Charge of the Brooke Benefice. In his address at the service Bishop Alan gave permission for us to decide for ourselves what title she will be known by. Lynn has asked that we all use the title “Vicar” as this is understood by most people in our communities. It is already the title widely used in the Brooke Benefice and people in the Hempnall Group are beginning to get used to it too. When the legal status of the new benefice is finalised, Lynn will automatically become its Priest-in-Charge.

Please continue to pray for our new benefice and for all those who are involved in planning and organising at this time. There is a huge amount to think about and for quite some time many things will need to be experimental or temporary. We are very keen to know your thoughts, hopes and dreams, so please get in touch with a member of the Formation Team, or your Churchwarden or Designated Person, at any time.