

RECTOR'S REPORT 2019

Well, my report this evening feels nearly as strange as my very first one here 10 years ago – coming in new and trying to learn how to Chair an APCM. Hopefully having now done these 11 times – you'll have got used to my way of leading it! But as you know, this will be my last, and hence why this feels strange tonight!

Usually, a report from your Rector at an APCM is a time for vision and leading the Parish in to the year that lies ahead. Except this time, for obvious reasons, this is difficult for me to offer. Times of change and transition are very much where trust and faith come in to play – I very much hope and pray these next few months won't be as confusing as 'Brexit' has been! 'Flexit' as I have been calling it will be happening on Sunday, and that is another reason I won't say too much tonight as my final thoughts will be shared with our Group at our final service.

However, I have every faith that the future is bright here and won't be confusing. Firstly, I leave you with three excellent clergy friends here who will continue to lead services and offer support. Elizabeth, Dylan and Helen are a tower of strength and will guide you through this time, and I thank them for all their support. **But** do not get heavily dependent – vacancies are wonderful times for more lay involvement and gifts coming to the fore. Please pray for our PCC, Ministry Team and Vacancy Team who will also guide you in the coming months. I will be praying that this won't be a long vacancy for you, but if it is to

be, then continuing to trust in God's timing is so important, as His timing will often be different to ours. Important thing is you get the right person to follow me, however long that takes. Secondly, I know things won't be confusing as I am leaving with many things in the Group in a good place, which can continue to flourish and evolve.

Do have a look at the APCM report and noticeboards here which lists so many things the Group have achieved in the last year, and we have always had a history of being an active Parish and Group. I am sure that will continue. I will be saying on Sunday though, that a feature of a Group should not be just about the successes of its achievements however nice that may be. However, the 'being' there with people and what we offer in our Churches is of equal importance. Our prayer, worship, pastoral care and hospitality are all the foundation of our ministry here. As the RNWK Group continues to evolve, we are blessed with not only a variety of clergy here, but also lay ministers. A big thank you to Angie, Lawrie, Anne, Alan, Alison, Joe, Susan and Carol who provide our Group with so much. And we also have the great news of Pauline Foster and Steph Parfitt from Longfield recently starting their LLM training. And all of this is really key as we hear nationally that there are now less clergy, and every possibility there will be less clergy in RNWK in years to come, so it is vital that we keep encouraging and fostering vocations amidst you all. Here in Fawkham and Hartley as I look back over a decade it fills me with great pride that

we have all helped Angie in her training as an LLM, Cathy Knight-Scott in her ordination training. And as a Group it has been an immense privilege to help train Mell and Helen towards the positions they now hold. And we continue to pray for William Davie and Ollie Phipps who we have supported through their selection route. Will is getting on well at Trinity College, Bristol and Ollie will start his training at West Malling in September. And I would also like to thank Brian Bowes who for the last few months has successfully chaired our Group Council. Watch this space for developments with how the Group Council will evolve over the next few months. So, a challenge for you, not just during the vacancy but in these coming years – is God calling **you** to a new type of ministry within the Group? You are in a very supportive place here to further those questions if you feel the answer is 'yes'.

A big congratulations to Christine and Gill as they embark on being our new Churchwardens (only with me for three days!) and thank you to those this evening who are willing to stand for PCC and Deanery Synod. It has been great to see our Churchwardens across the Group get together to provide support and share common issues. A huge thank you again to Valerie and Andrew for all they have given these last few years, and as I look back over my ten years, I would like to thank all the Churchwardens I have worked with – to Pauline, Brian Frost, Lindsey and Bob. An extra part of being a Churchwarden now in case you have forgotten, is that the Group clergy and wardens now

put together a Group-wide service rota which has helped gel us together even more and continues to offer a varied amount of services for you all each week.

And it's this word 'together' that is something I would like to end on. Last year at the APCM I spoke of the new Diocesan Vision, 'Called Together' – seeing the wider picture of what we are part of in our diocese. I'll be saying on Sunday, how our greatest strength is in being and working together. In this day and age, where Christians can feel pushed out of things, and also after seeing the atrocity of the events in New Zealand last week, it is so important we show solidarity. As we move in to a new Chapter of our ministry here, may we be united in our differences and celebrate our Christian presence across RNWK. This does feel like a two-parter tonight – and that is, please do come and hear part two on Sunday, as we celebrate my time here. And to reassure you that you are in good hands for the future, I will leave the final word with Dylan, who is here representing the Group clergy tonight.