

Clergy Report

I have now been in post for nearly one year. Although I have worked across the five parishes of the Benefice, I have focussed particularly on Charfield and Kingswood, tending to lead Sunday worship in those parishes, especially at key occasions, as well as regular mid-week worship with Kingswood's morning prayer and Charfield's communion. I attend their PCCs, and Churches Together Groups and chair their LIFE groups, and take most of the funerals and baptisms that take place in these parishes. In theory, this should also extend to weddings, but in practice there have been very few, and those that there have been have already begun a pastoral dialogue with David Russell which it has seemed sensible to continue through. Funerals have indeed been a major feature of my ministry, since in both parishes, but particularly Charfield, there have been a number of well-attended funerals. These have probably contributed more to making my face widely known in the villages than almost any other form of ministry.

Within Charfield I have become a regular member of the Open the Book Team, and in Kingswood of the Messy Church Team and, until we mothballed it due to a shortage of suitably-aged children, the Mini Praise. I also participated in the Holiday Club. I have had some contact with Charfield and Kingswood Primary Schools and Charfield pre-School through assemblies, but these have tended to be at key points of the church calendar such as harvest and Christmas rather than on a regular basis.

Highlights have been some of the key "set-piece" services. Remembrance at Charfield, with so many turning up to the memorial and a church full of uniformed organisations was great, as was the very different Remembrance in the evening at Kingswood, with its creativity. The Christmas season gave opportunity for a number of creative services, and the unprecedented numbers at the St James Carol service was really quite something... possibly the biggest congregation I have ever had outside of a wedding or funeral.

My hours are supposed to be six sessions per week, where "session" means morning, afternoon or evening. I have not given myself set hours, as there is no need to do so and the nature of the job is that flexibility is an asset. Some weeks I may not do my full six sessions, on others I do considerably more, and the running average is a little over the set time.

I have enjoyed working with both churches, which are distinctly different. I would say that Charfield's great virtue is its friendliness and sense of community, Kingswood's is its dynamism and imagination. With so much going for them, though, what has surprised me about these churches is how relatively small their congregations are, based on my previous experience of rural ministry... I am genuinely puzzled as to why they are not better attended, as I think they are great! This may perhaps mean I am singularly ill-qualified to help build them up, but I will do what I can.

I have been fortunate in both churches to have very reliable, experienced and talented church officers and activists who carry the burden of keeping the smooth running of the church going and to whom I know I can always turn for sound advice. Also, both churches, whilst not swimming in money, are financially sound due to committed giving (always a sign of general commitment) and good management. At the same time, we cannot afford to be complacent. That we are in this good position has been due to the very hard work of quite a small number of people, whose energy is not inexhaustible, and it is not always obvious who their successors might be.

Gloucester is the third diocese in which I have worked (most of my ministry has been in Chelmsford, but most recently I had three years in Salisbury). Early impressions are that it is a good diocese to work in, and indeed to see the way the LIFE initiative seems to have been welcomed at grass-roots level is commendable... my previous experience of such initiatives has been of a rather cynical response! It has also been good to work with David Russell, a capable and reliable Team Rector and a faithful and committed priest.

Plans for the coming year, apart from "more of the same", include the St James Jamboree with archery at Charfield and the Centenary of the Armistice at Kingswood.

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