



*The Church of England Parish of Saint Andrew
in the Diocese of Canterbury
and under the care of the Bishop of Richborough*

St Andrew's Church

West Street

Deal, Kent CT14 6DY

Parish Priest: Fr Paul F Blanch

Phone: 01843 654102 or 07934 854973

Email: ppstfrancis@gmail.com

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Dear parishioner of St Andrew's Church in Deal,

Our future?

As your new Priest in Charge (Interim) I write to share with you some of my hopes and plans for our future together, and at the same time be honest about our current financial status.

As we leave behind the memories of 2020, which for many has been an exceedingly difficult year, and as we prepare ourselves for all that 2021 will present to us by way of challenge, I take this opportunity to first extend my sincere thanks to all parishioners and congregation members for their massive support to our Church and its worshipping life over these most testing months of Covid-19 lockdown. I also take this opportunity to thank you for your support and faithful giving for the last four plus years when you have been without a full-time parish priest. It goes without saying that a huge debt of gratitude is owed to the retired priests who have ministered to you faithfully over an exceptionally long period of time. Thank you to Fr Anthony and Fr Roger in particular.

As I am only your interim priest in charge, with a small, contracted number of hours available in the parish, I want to encourage you and lead you with inspirational leadership to the best of my ability, even with the time constraints placed upon me at present.

As the Covid-19 restrictions are gradually lifted, it is my sincere desire to move us forward in hope and at the same time to deepen our faith and live into the promises of the Kingdom of God.

The return to normality in parish life will need to be cautious, safe and within the constraints of the government guidelines. It is my hope that as and when we can return to full public worship and the sharing of warm Christian fellowship again the landscape will look and feel incredibly different.

Our immediate concerns.

One of the many implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic has been to fragment our fellowship with one another in a physical sense. You have also experienced an exceptionally long vacancy that has left the day-to-day practical leadership to a small

group of dedicated lay folks within the Church, and we cannot expect priestly leadership on an everyday level to be the responsibility of the retired clergy.

I and many others believe it is time to focus on a positive future, leaving behind the old concerns and methods to adapt to the very changing situation within the wider Church. The Covid-19 crisis has placed the national Church into a serious financial situation, and many dioceses are having to address full-time clergy numbers, and this affects us sharply here at St Andrew's. You may well have heard or read in the media the acute state of affairs the national Church has found itself in as this has featured widely.

The harsh reality of the situation at present is that on current levels of giving there is little hope of St Andrew's being able to recruit a full-time Rector, and my role is as stated only interim at present. Your PCC however is working hard to investigate how we might enter a more formal relationship with Holy Trinity Church in Ramsgate that could potentially effect a 50/50 sharing of priestly resources which should be more affordable.

The truth of the matter is that currently just to pay our already reduced Parish Share we are taking up to £1,500 per month from our meagre reserves of just £23,000. Furthermore, after conversation with our Treasurer, I am aware that a further £3,400 of that £23,000 is already earmarked for projects already agreed to, and there may be other monies required for further fabric repairs, so you do not have to be a mathematician to work out that at that rate it is only a matter of months before we are bankrupt.

It is far from perfect that a new parish priest must begin his ministry with such a letter, but I would be failing in my duty were I not to spell out the situation in which we currently find ourselves and the reality thereof.

It is my belief that an exciting future is achievable, and that as the people of God we can achieve this through our stewardship and commitment.

I am sure that we all want to see St Andrew's flourish and be set for a vibrant ministry to the people of Deal well into the future, so I ask you all to consider prayerfully how we might make that happen together.

I share with you a quotation that always challenges me in my personal giving, and perhaps it might be a suitable theme for you to reflect on in your own personal daily prayers.

Fr Paul F Blanch

“You will always spend your money on what is most important to you... If your giving to the church of Jesus Christ is poor, it is a clear sign that you are not excited about the things that God takes delight in. And, if you truly do take delight in the growth and success of Christ's church, put your money where your heart is”.

Rod Rogers