



ST MARY'S WITH ST PETER'S BURY ST EDMUNDS

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seeking to **worship** the God and Father of our Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit; to **teach** the Bible in a way relevant to everyday life; to **grow** people in faith, understanding and love; to **equip** people to serve others; to **offer** people opportunities to meet Jesus and discover forgiveness and new life.

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From the vicar: Malcolm Rogers

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ

VICAR'S LETTER AUGUST 2015

I'm beginning to write this while we are running our holiday club. We've had 35 children, or should I say, Polar Explorers, for the week. I did express some skepticism about running a holiday club in July which speaks about trekking through snow, but we had a snow machine!! We've been looking at four bible characters and learning that nobody makes too many mistakes for God (Peter), nobody is too insignificant for God (Stephen), nobody is too bad for God (Saul who becomes Paul) and nobody is too young for God (Timothy). It has also been great to see such a fantastic team of helpers from both churches working together, and also to have Caroline Vallance from Great Barton free Church again helping head up the club. I'm really grateful to Alison for coordinating the whole thing.

NEW STAFFING

Nick Alexander will be licensed as associate vicar to the parish on Tuesday 8 September at 7pm at St Peter's. It would be great if you could join us for this service. Nick will primarily be acting vicar of St Peter's. In the service I symbolically place him in my 'stall' (I wasn't aware that there was one!), and I will delegate my responsibility for St Peter's to him. He will head up the St Peter's staff team and committee. He will also play a parish role, helping with the occasional offices (thanksgivings and baptisms, weddings and funerals) and with some of the larger services. He will initially help with the evening services at St Mary's, although we may seek to develop future initiatives. He has also been asked to play a diocesan role in exploring how we can use sport to advance the gospel.

Nick's appointment should free me up to focus more on the two morning congregations at St Mary's: and I do look forward very much to be able to work not only with the 9.30 congregation but now much more with the 11am congregation.

I am immensely grateful to members of our churches for responding so generously to the appeal to increase general giving, and it is this which has made the appointment of Nick possible. The response has been amazing and we are seeing a potential increase in giving of about £30k for this year. That is a long way toward reaching our target of an increase in annual general giving of £50k, which is what is required if we are to pay for the additional post. THANK YOU VERY MUCH INDEED.

It has also been a joy to welcome **Laurence Smith** as our curate, and Hannah his wife. Laurence is mainly based at St Mary's, but will be involved with most areas of the parish's ministry. I have however asked him specifically to head up our work with young people on Friday evenings (the Fridge) and also the Sunday evening youth bible study (Amplify). This is not something that he can do on his own, and we need people who would be able to work with him. If you are interested, do speak to him or contact him on revlaurencsmith@gmail.com

Andrew Buttress will also be joining the team in September as our coordinator for theological education. He will continue to run Spectrum courses and the East Anglian Preaching Course, but also begin to develop new work across the parish. It will be great to have him on the parish team. Do watch this space!

Given the changes, the two big issues for the parish are growth and unity.

We have sought to appoint an associate vicar not because the job of vicar of this parish is impossible for a single person (all things are possible!), but because we hope that additional staff will enable us to grow. This is very much part of the **diocesan vision for growth**: which is that we will promote growth in numbers, in depth (faith), in influence (in love for others) and that the age profile will grow younger.

There are therefore a number of initiatives that I trust will happen this Autumn. We are hoping to run an **Alpha or Exploring Christianity** course at some point this Autumn. We have **film evenings** planned at St Mary's on Saturday 17 October and Saturday 5 December (both at 6pm).

We are also planning to show the DVD, **My Hope with Billy Graham** on Sunday evening 1st November at 6.30pm. Many older Christians today will speak of the enormous significance that Billy Graham has had on our lives. He was and is used by God in amazing ways. I remember hearing him speak to 20000 people at Sunderland Football stadium about 30 years ago, and being astonished at how many people responded to his invitation to give their lives to Christ. Many of those people are still Christians today. Billy Graham is 96 and suffers from Parkinsons, but this DVD includes interviews with him, clips from the rallies, and testimonies from a couple of people whose lives have been changed because they met Jesus. They are particularly appropriate for people who would like to find out more about the Christian faith, and it would be wonderful if many people could come along to St Mary's and bring friends on that evening. I'm hoping we will be able to serve refreshments after the event. If you would like to check out the video to see if it is appropriate to bring someone along, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzZFNfO1rec>

Our **harvest services** are fast approaching: They are at St Peter's on Sunday 4th October at 10.45am, and at St Mary's our 9.30 and 11am services are joining together on Sunday 11th October at 10.30am.

As our two churches develop their own lives, there is an increasing need for us to guard our unity.

That unity is fundamentally built on the foundation of Jesus Christ the Son of God, his death and resurrection, and on our belief that the bible is the fully authoritative Word of God. At an organisational level, it is built on the fact that there is still a single parish vicar, we have a shared parish vision, a single PCC, and the Hyndman Centre is our shared resource.

However I do see the **evening services at 6.30pm at St Mary's** of increased significance. There are a range of services that we offer in the evening: from the big subject on the second Sunday of the month, choral evensong on the first and third, a communion on the fourth, and space to do something different on the fifth! In the Autumn, we will be looking at a series of incidents in the life of Jesus, chosen because they are depicted in the earliest known set of mosaics portraying a life of Christ that we have. They are from about 450AD, and are found in a church in Ravenna in North Italy. In each mosaic there is a disciple who either points us to Jesus, is praying, or is moving us on to the next image and next stage of discipleship. They begin with the command to follow Jesus and they end with his death and resurrection.

The **parish prayer meeting** on the third Wednesday of each month at 7.45pm is also vital for our unity. This is the one time when people from our two churches can come together, and as of critical importance as we enter into our new phase of ministry here in the parish. We meet for an hour, worship (whether in song, using a short form of evening prayer, or saying a Psalm together), hear about and pray for the mission focus of the month, and spend time praying for the needs of individuals, the parish and wider. It is also often the place where you hear things first!! I appreciate that not everyone is comfortable with open prayer, but if you come along you do not have to pray out loud, and it would be great to see you.

There is much more that is happening. **Samuel Maduma**, a minister from Tanzania, is joining us at St Mary's on Sunday 13th September, and there is opportunity to meet with him for a Bring and Share tea at the home of Clive & Christine Paine, 11 Sharp Road, 3pm – 5pm that afternoon. Please ring 753411 if you wish to come. Rosemary Morris is advertising a **visit to India** to see educational work among the 'Dalit people' (former untouchables). We are hosting the West Suffolk WI's centenary service. And we don't have any other celebrity weddings planned! Just one advance notice: our midnight Christmas communion, which has traditionally begun at 11.30pm, will this year begin at 11pm.