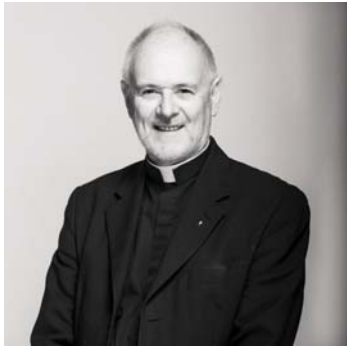


A few words from the Vicarage ...



As we await the signing of the ecumenical Covenant this month (which also heralds the new church year at Advent), we look forward with renewed hope and enthusiasm for the future working together of committed Christians here in Ansdell & Fairhaven. This is a wonderful opportunity to show the people around us something of the graciousness of our witness to Christ by uniting in this way. It is hugely significant for our congregation here at St Paul's that Bishop Geoff, the

Bishop of Lancaster, will sign this document on our behalf as he does so with the authority of the Episcopacy. I am indebted to Bishop Geoff much more than mere words can articulate. It is my earnest prayer that this will prove to be a platform for our future as the Churches Together to spread the Gospel message ever more widely.

Yet another milestone is reached at this time – this being the 50th edition of the Pews News Extra – it seems such a short time since I introduced this as a monthly publication and we have seen it grow and develop over the period into the marvellous magazine it has now become ... much admired and eagerly awaited each month. My huge thanks to Charlotte (its first Editor) and to Janet (who took over the reigns) for all their hard work in producing and publishing it ... as well as a ready band of helpers who from time to time have assisted with putting each edition together every month.

As we now anticipate the future, with a new Archbishop of Canterbury waiting in the wings, the search has begun for a new Bishop of Blackburn, we may take heart that the future will be one of great challenge and excitement as well as a unique opportunity for us to grow and develop locally. To this end, our MAP group is directing its attention to raising three objectives which will be submitted at the end of their review process. These will go forward to the PCC to endorse before coming to the wider church family for implementation. I for one am looking forward with much zeal and enthusiasm to the next stage in this process. Please continue to pray for the team in this hugely important work.

In this Advent Season, we prepare once more to celebrate the birth of our Lord at Christmas; we begin afresh our journey with him from crib to cross; and we are ever mindful of our own journeys of faith. We are mindful of the pitfalls which lie in wait for us and we place ourselves firmly in God's hands, trusting in his grace and his strength to illuminate our path along the way.

I pray for a holy Advent and a Happy Christmas for all and look forward to welcoming everyone at the various services being held over this period. Hopefully there is something for everyone to enjoy and I hope and pray that each will be well attended. It is part of our commitment to Christ to work together as a family – what better way and what better time to show that commitment than by being in church, celebrating Advent and Christmas?

God bless you all,

Your Vicar,

Fr D.