

A few words from the Vicarage ...



*Christmas is a-coming ... yes, it's that time of year again as, on Advent Sunday, we begin a New Year (Year A) in the church's calendar. Advent is upon us and we have a busy schedule of services as we prepare for the arrival of the Christ-child once more. We have survived the long, hot summer and are now in the midst of the long dark evenings - whether you have your *chestnuts roasting by an open fire* I'll leave for you to decide!*

Advent is a time of preparation and we have already held the first of a series of four Advent study sessions - the three remaining dates being 2nd, 9th & 16th December. In these study groups we are seeking to share and develop our understanding of what our faith is; and how it impacts upon our lives and the lives of others. The plan is to repeat this sharing and learning process next year during Lent with five sessions starting on Monday, 10th March.

During December we have our usual Advent and Christmas services and will be taking a group of carollers to the South Hey Residential complex and to Lake View Care Home. They and we look forward to these visits and hope that the outcome is as joyous as in previous years. The Ansdell & Fairhaven Churches Together Advent Service is on Wednesday, 4th December at the White Church to which all are invited.

The Heyhouses Community Choir will be joining us this year at our Christingle Café, which will be a real bonus as we gather round the tables for fun, food and fellowship, whilst creating our individual Christingles.

Looking back, it was a delight to have a group of parishioners in church on Armistice Day as we welcomed Bishop Julian and his wife, Heather to the parish as they toured the Deanery. Despite their late arrival, they were warmly received and we hope that it won't be too long before they are able to return - perhaps for a little longer next time.

Also, on Sunday, 3rd November we had our first attempt at an interactive dialogue and engagement with scripture as we gathered in the hall after the 10.00am service to discuss the readings for that day. Those who participated did so with enthusiasm and interest, and benefitted from the experience. We will look to do this again at regular intervals - so watch this space for details of the next one.

Turning our gaze forward now, we will act as hosts for the Churches Together service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - at 7.30 pm on Wednesday, 22nd January.

Have a good Advent and happy and blessed Christmas, God bless you all,

Your Vicar,

Fr D.



PS For health reasons, Ken Pocock is retiring from the various posts held here at St Paul's. We are hugely grateful for all Ken has done in the past (and for what he will continue to do in a less stressful capacity) and thank him enormously for his hard work and dedication.

On a similar vein, Peter Swindells has decided to retire as a Reader at the end of December - having served as a Licensed Reader for almost 30 years, he feels that the time has come to hang up his badge! Also a past churchwarden at St Paul's before going off to pastures new (to St Paul's, Warton), it has been my privilege to have him return and serve alongside him these last few years. I am delighted to say that Bishop Julian has invited Peter to accept the status of Reader Emeritus - which is well deserved. Again we thank Peter for all his service and wish him well in 'retirement'.