

## **Holy Trinity Church Update - presentation for Village Meeting 18<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

The past year at Holy Trinity Church has been one of huge change. With Rev'd Bob Mitchell retiring in September, we embarked on our inter-regnum with considerable trepidation as to how long it could last, how we would manage services, and how we might succeed in finding a new priest in charge.

Over a series of succession meetings with our counterparts at Tillington and Upwaltham we discussed the preparation needed to search for a new incumbent. Central to our success in finding one was the production of a Parish Profile, a detailed document highlighting everything that our church and community would be able to offer a new Priest in Charge, and giving a flavour of the type of person that we were ideally looking for. This was a team effort with contributions from all three parishes, and under the guidance of the Archdeacon of Horsham Fiona Windsor, the document was put together. The final version was submitted in October, and the vacancy was then advertised on the Chichester Diocese website from November onwards.

During these meetings, it became clear that there was actually no set way to run our church services in an inter-regnum. The traditionally accepted format was to invite local retired clergy to take our services, but after much discussion, we agreed that this could also be an opportunity to try something else.

Holy Trinity Church became a Festival Church at the start of 2016, so by the time Rev'd Bob left, we had enjoyed 18 months of a more informal and sociable service format once a month, which had been very positive. Inspired by this success, we decided to run the services mostly ourselves, based on the format that Rev'd Bob introduced. This proved to be very popular, with different people stepping forward to take the services, and it gave us the opportunity to focus on having relevant, informal and uplifting services.

In January this year we received the application for the Priest in Charge post from Reverend Debbie Smith via Archdeacon Fiona. Aside from having an impressive CV of wonderful experience, particularly with Messy Church, we were struck by how enthusiastically Debbie came across, and very keen to find out more. Debbie and her husband Andrew who is also ordained, were living in New Zealand at the time, so an interview was set up on Skype. Following the interview there was unanimous agreement to offer the job to Debbie – we were delighted to have found someone so vibrant, and excited to consider what she and Andrew might bring to our communities. Debbie and Andrew accepted the job without being able to visit our villages, meet any of us face to face, or see the Rectory which would become their home, so we were really thrilled that they decided to take that leap of faith to join us from the other side of the world. This month's parish magazine has a lovely article from Debbie at the Rectory describing just that.

Debbie's licensing service took place on May 29<sup>th</sup>, and it was lovely to welcome her and Andrew to their first service at Holy Trinity yesterday evening, which was followed by drinks in the churchyard. Going forward, the services will be taken on a monthly pattern of a Festival Service on the second Sunday of the month at 10:30, and a Book of Common Prayer communion service every 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month at 10:30. Debbie and Andrew will both be taking services – usually Debbie for the Festival service and Andrew for the BCP.

In addition to having a new Priest in Charge, there have been a number of changes to the Holy Trinity PCC. Following the sad passing of Paul Denham in January, our Treasurer is now Liz Beadsley, Ruth Aitchison is now Church Warden with me, and Sue Laker has taken on the role of parish magazine contributions. Julie Denham is, as ever, our very efficient secretary, and our other PCC members are Tuema Pattie and Martin Fleetwood.

Every church needs regularly looking after with some tender loving care, and at Holy Trinity in addition to our hard working PCC, we are lucky to have a dedicated team of flower arrangers and cleaners, and for our services the sacristan team and sidespeople ensure proceedings go smoothly.

Just before Christmas, we received the positive news that the Holy Trinity Church building had been awarded Grade Two Listing status. This project was overseen by Nigel Clifford, and had been a lengthy process as the application was first submitted in November 2016. Together with Peter Thomas, Nigel is now looking at applications for grants to help towards the cost of renovations and repairs, in particular from the Heritage Lottery Fund and from Sussex Historical Churches. The church building is due a Quinquennial Inspection by an architect which will highlight areas needing attention, and we are already aware of a repair needed to the roof. Whatever grants are available will not cover the full cost of any repairs and we are expected to make a financial contribution, so we will also soon be looking into a fund raising plan to do so.

Throughout the year, the monthly village coffee mornings in church organised by Helen and Nigel Clifford have enjoyed continued success. They have become such welcoming gatherings to chat about village matters, and have raised much-needed funds for the charity Samara's Aid, which helps displaced people, refugees and victims of war in Syria and the Middle East.

We are very much looking forward to what the next year will bring for our new services with Debbie and Andrew, and looking at a vision of where we can now go in the future. We will be particularly keen to focus on what we can do for young families in the village, and to build on the success of our Festival services over the past couple of years.

We managed the inter - regnum by rolling up our sleeves to keep our church going strong, and our stalwart community spirit prevailed. The next chapter will soon unfold...

Louise Hartley, Holy Trinity Church Warden.