



Welcome to our first Have I Got Pews For You. The thought is that these occasional publications will give space to say something about the direction of travel for our Benefice. This one is about how I see Benefice life over the coming year (although God is often in the business of surprises and we should always be prepared for the unexpected). I hope that it will provide vision without being constricting and confining, allowing space for others to develop and build upon initial ideas. As a Proverb in the Bible says "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." The ideas come from prayer, conversations and observations with the question 'shall we give it a try and see how God might use it? Here goes....I've spent the summer thinking about Estuaries.....I bet you weren't expecting me to say that! Estuaries are those bodies of water that lie between the end of Fresh Water and salty Sea Water. They have their own very unusual ecosystems, strange habitats and weird creatures live there. Some are unique to that place, alongside others from both fresh and sea water, where these usually separate species come together. Estuaries are meeting points, neither fully one or the other but completely unique at the same time. I offer this thought and illustration as I begin to think about the coming months.

Fresh Water -----Estuary-----Sea Water

Perhaps traditional worship might be seen as Freshwater with Contemporary Worship Sea Water and there are times when these things mix and we find something different, sometimes beautiful, perhaps sometimes a bit strange but always unique! We could also think about this in terms of church life and community life. Estuaries are a place where these two things mix and impact each other. And finally and perhaps most significantly for what follows is that if we think about our parishes as either Fresh Water or Salt Water. It doesn't matter which one you think you are but what is interesting is when those things come together and form brackish water. This can't be formed on its own, it's only in the mixing. There is much that is beautiful about our own ecosystem our own parishes which should be celebrated but when we mix we are able to create and form new and different things. Not better but importantly we can do different things. What follows is an attempt to imagine those things that we can do together which we can't do apart. They won't happen without support, and this will look different for each of you. It might be practical, prayerful or a mixture of the two. As our church logo says, we aim to 'Make Christ Visible' by the things we do, say and the values that we hold, the Jesus way of Compassion, Justice, Hope, Joy and the greatest of these is Love.

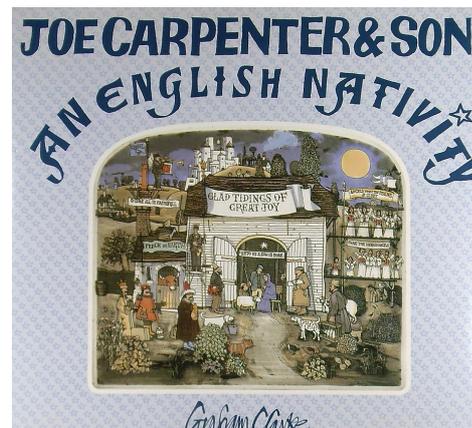
Rev'd Lewis

'Being with' Course

In October I will be going on some training to be able to experience and run a new course called 'Being With.' The Being With course is an introduction to Christianity with a difference. At its heart is the idea that God's greatest desire is to be with us in Jesus. Grounded in the conviction that we already have a wealth of understanding of truth, beauty and goodness that signify God's presence in our lives and everyday experiences, it aims to enable participants to discover dimensions of this presence and to live abundantly with God, with one another and with creation. The sessions focus on the themes of Meaning; Essence; Jesus; Church; Bible; Mission; Cross; Prayer; Suffering and Resurrection. Drawing on the practices of Godly Play, the course uses storytelling, wondering and reflection to encourage and welcome the insights that each person brings. I hope that after the training this will be something that we are able to offer those who are new to or want to explore the Christian faith.

Advent & Christmas

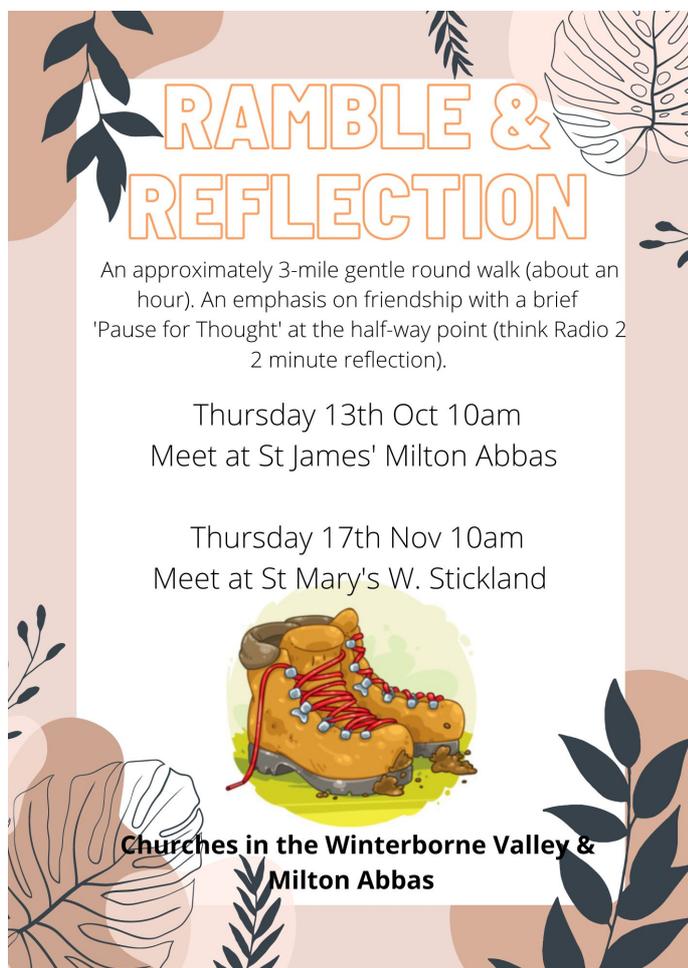
Advent and Christmas are always one of the busiest times, and most significant times to speak of Jesus and to throw some fun around as well. Imagine the scene... our churches filled with local people as the lights go up and the 'actors' hit the stage with people wondering is that really Bill from No.4 behind the costume.



Alongside some of our more traditional Carol services this fun but also extremely poignant re-telling of the Christmas story will engage people of all ages. With mulled wine, hot chocolate, twinkling fairy lights and well known carols interspersing the evening. My hope is that we will be able to do performances in a number of our villages during the run up to Christmas. This will need a willing and committed cast who are willing to rehearse over the autumn and be available for performances. The cast needs approx 10-12 people, some roles are very small. No previous acting experience necessary but a good sense of humour and willingness to give things a go is vital. People may come from our churches or wider communities.

Ramble & Reflection

A great chance to meet with friends and also to invite new people to join us. With coffee to power us along our way and the chance to stop and to reflect as well.



RAMBLE & REFLECTION

An approximately 3-mile gentle round walk (about an hour). An emphasis on friendship with a brief 'Pause for Thought' at the half-way point (think Radio 2 2 minute reflection).

Thursday 13th Oct 10am
Meet at St James' Milton Abbas

Thursday 17th Nov 10am
Meet at St Mary's W. Stickland

Churches in the Winterborne Valley & Milton Abbas

Benefice Prayer

One of things that we've not got back into a routine of since the pandemic is offering the chance to gather collectively for prayer. Over the past two years I've prayed in each of our church buildings as much as possible each week. From October I am proposing a time to meet each week for those who would like to join me. I will continue to pray personally in our parishes but in a less routine way and I've found allocating a day to each parish doesn't always work out. But for those who would like to join me I will pray at St Mary's Winterborne Whitechurch on a Thursday morning at 9am for approx half an hour and I'd love you to join me, we might even have a coffee at the end. It will be simple and relaxed, you don't need to be an expert in prayer but simply come with a willingness to pray for our world, communities and those who have asked for our prayers. You won't be asked to do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable. If you are unable to make these time you might like to join us at the same time wherever you are praying for our parishes and shared ministry.

Holy Communion

Communion is the most central act of Christian worship particularly within the Anglican Church. In and through it we meet Jesus, remembering him through his actions at the Last Supper. Since the Covid pandemic we have changed our practice of how we have received the bread and particularly the wine. A decision has been made nationally to make it permissible to re-introduce the common cup. Most if not all of our surrounding Benefices have done this. From October I am planning to reintroduce the option of sharing in the common cup. This is done in the knowledge that some will want to partake whilst others will not. It is perfectly acceptable to receive the bread without drinking from the chalice. I will also continue for the time-being to intinct (dip) the wafers into a small amount of wine. What I would ask is that you do not intinct your own wafers in the chalice for practical hygiene reasons as fingers can easily end up touching the wine.

Peter Wells - LLM

By the time you read this Peter will either have been, or will about to be licensed as a Licensed Lay Minister sometimes called 'Reader.' Peter has worked incredibly hard over the past two years to complete his training which is challenging and extensive. Once licensed Peter is able to conduct non-communion services across the Benefice as well as preaching and fulfilling pastoral responsibilities. This is a new phase of life and ministry for him so please pray for him and make him welcome as he settles into this role.



Easter Messy Mornings

During Holy Week 2023 I'd like to run a holiday club for Primary School aged children for 3 days. A mixture of messy games, craft, food and music all telling the Jesus story to young people in our villages. The week will end with a celebration family service on Easter Day and an Easter egg hunt. A team will be needed to realise this idea.

Lent: In Conversation with.....

Back in May 2021 we had a series of interviews called 'In Conversation With....' These interviews were with different people from all walks of life, who were interviewed about how their faith influenced their work. We had a poet and a stand-up comedian amongst others. Over many years we've had a lent course in the Benefice which has been warmly received. In 2023 we are going to change things and try another series of interviews with people who we think might just have something to say to us about life and faith. Do give some thought to people we could invite, think big like Jimmy who suggested Bear Grylls when I mentioned the idea to him! Think big whilst also thinking local and do let me know your ideas.