

The Parish of Brereton & Rugeley

Part of the
Brereton, Rugeley and Armitage Team
Ministry

The future flourishing of our parish in a new
era after Covid-19



1 Church in 6 Places

May 2021

Coronavirus has had lots of different impacts on many aspects of our life together as church. These changes are being felt at every level of the Church of England. In our Team Ministry (Benefice) we are having to adapt the way we follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ in mission and outreach as we engage with our local communities. We believe that the community of Christians in the benefice will grow as we put our trust in God. Covid is forcing the whole of the Church of England to refocus on what it means to be worshipping and serving communities of faith.

"All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well."

— Julian of Norwich (1342-1416)

Whilst this document relates largely to the parish of Brereton & Rugeley, we are mindful that many of the issues are relevant to the developing relationship between the parishes of Armitage and Brereton and Rugeley. Therefore, there is a degree of overlap which will emerge over coming months and years.

What guides us in period of change?

The answer to this question is our *values*.

Values are rather like a compass bearing. They always remind us



of how we want to be as church communities and how we want to act.

1. We are a community of faith in Jesus Christ as revealed through the Bible.
2. Our worship will seek to give glory to God and give loving service to our local communities.
3. We will be flexible and innovative in our ways of reaching out to others.
4. We will respect all people in this and the surrounding communities and be a place of welcome for all.
5. We will always seek to be friendly, kind, compassionate, generous, trustworthy, and to build a community of safety and hope for all.
6. We will be ambassadors for the care of God's creation.
7. We will seek to be led by the Spirit of God in all we do and are.

Another important set of guiding principles for all Anglican churches around the world (The Anglican Communion) are the 5 Marks of Mission. ***The Five Marks of Mission*** are important statements on the wider mission of the church.

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation

- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Leadership in the church.

The traditional way of running parishes that goes back hundreds of years was that there was a vicar and there was a congregation. The situation was that the great majority of people living in a parish went to church and the vicar took all the services and looked after the flock.

Nowadays very few people go to church on Sundays. Increasingly a vicar will cover several church congregations. Whilst there may be over 30,000 people living in our benefice, we attract a combined congregation of around 120 people! How times have changed. Such changes in circumstances force all parishes to ask what should the church in the 21st century look like and what should it be doing? What is the role of the clergy and other leaders? These are questions for all of us in our parishes. They are questions also for people at all levels of the Church of England.

Having a vicar costs money. A full-time post is the equivalent of around £52,000 which covers housing, a stipend of around £26,000, pension and the other usual 'on costs' (National Insurance, Tax etc) as well as a contribution to the central costs of running the Diocese. Up until recently, the Parish of Brereton & Rugeley was paying the Diocese of Lichfield Board of Finance for 2 full time posts and was therefore

paying just over £100,000 a year, money given faithfully by the members of the congregations and through other fund-raising activities. In recent years, not surprisingly, the parish of Brereton & Rugeley struggled to afford this amount *and* pay all the other costs of keeping our buildings in a safe and welcoming condition and of course, the costs of our activities to support our wider local communities. In 2020 one of the two full time vicars, Revd George Holding, left the parish after 6 years' service. The Parish Church Council in March this year agreed to disestablish the vacant post thereby reducing immediately the amount we pay to the Lichfield Diocese Board of Finance by half each year. We will not be recruiting any new clergy to the Parish for the foreseeable future.

It is important to acknowledge that the parish of Brereton & Rugeley benefits from the half-time allocation of Revd Peter Hart's time which is subsidised by the Diocese, an arrangement that has recently been renewed for a further three-year term. The parish of Brereton & Rugeley incurs no financial responsibility for this arrangement.

It's by no means all gloom and doom!

The first thing to say is that although as a parish we haven't met our full payments to Lichfield Diocese Board of Finance in the last year, we have managed to raise a lot of money - £50,000 in 2020 for the

Parish Share alone, which given the circumstances is wonderful.

Secondly, the Church of England recognises that the future of the Church depends on people who are not ordained as vicars (so called 'lay people' or the 'laity') to be trained and enabled to lead worship and other important aspects of church and community life at the local level. Therefore, the role of vicars is changing to support, train and encourage lay leadership in the out working of mission and pastoral care. We recognise that this represents real change in how the clergy (vicars) work. We have already been training lay worship leaders, we have one Reader in training and another person is on the Pathways to Ministry course as well. We are also training people in listening skills and in debt advice. We are training people as welcomers so that when our church buildings are fully open again (after June 21st hopefully), we will be real *Places of Welcome*.

Thirdly, everyone can pray! I can imagine that some more elderly people might say that they are not young anymore and aren't able to play an active role in the life of the church and help support change. In fact, the church always will need people to be faithful in prayer.

- Pray that God will strengthen our faith, and that we will be encouraged to trust God. In our

faith let us be faithful. In our trust may we be trustworthy with what God has entrusted to us.

- Pray for our neighbours.
- Pray for the variety of ways that members of the church are helping people who are struggling in our communities.
- Please use the *31 days in May* Prayer booklet every day.

In moving forward there are some important principles that are fixed in place.

The central principles shaping our way ahead are:

Principle 1. Any and all clergy work across the whole benefice. In other words, no clergy person works with one congregation all the time, or can be perceived as 'belonging' to one particular congregation. This is not a new principle, for example Revd George Holding was licenced to the whole benefice, but because we had a larger team, she spent all her time at St Michael's. Fr David Evans (our Rector) works across all the churches taking Sunday services as and where required. The same applies to our Curate Revd Jo Wood and to Revd Brian Tabernor. Our retired clergy (Revd Margaret and Revd Jan) also work across the whole Team. Any additional clergy who may be appointed as and when finances allow, will fit in with this approach. This very much supports the idea of "one church in

six places". Revd Peter Hart's licensing arrangement fixes his commitment to the parish of Armitage at 50% of his time. The allocation of his time for the remaining 50% in the parish of Brereton and Rugeley will be consistent with this first principle.

Principle 2. Lay worship leaders Kate, Howard, Neil and Craig, and our Reader Steve Hammersley work across the whole benefice so that no congregation gets left behind or is under resourced.

Principle 3. Clergy are in post to support congregations who are called to deliver the shared vision and mission. *This emphasis is really important.* God's mission is worked out through all God's people and not just by vicars! Clergy are there for support and encouragement. This principle illustrates clearly that church operates 7 days a week and not just on Sundays for an hour and a half!

Principle 4. Each congregation has a local community with which it is called to engage. We are all called by God to actively be a part of His mission to our communities as followers of Jesus Christ.

Principle 5. Lay vocations are critical to the life and mission of our parish/benefice.



So, with all these things in our minds, we want to hear your views.

- 1. What excites you about the way ahead?*
- 2. What makes you feel daunted about the future of the church?*
- 3. What do you think is/are the biggest change/s in what is set out above?*
- 4. What impact do you think the changes will have on your faith?*

Please email rector@brateamministry.org your thoughts on the above questions.

Alternatively write to Fr David Evans, 20 Church Street, Rugeley WS15 2AB or call him on 079 1941 6900.