



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As part of her report at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 30 April, Rachel referred to examples of collaboration, both recent and planned, with the other local Anglican churches.

This collaboration enables us to maximise our capacity “to do things” and also more formally addresses a wish expressed by Bishop James at the time of appointing a new Priest-in-Charge that whoever was appointed should take the opportunity to explore, with the other churches in Southborough, ways of working together which would maximise the opportunities for mission in the local area.

Rachel read out an agreed statement (reproduced below *). This does not commit any of the churches in question to working in a particular or prescribed way, but it is a very real commitment to seek to work together in this coming year in whatever way is of greatest mutual benefit.

The Bishop has stated his intention that St Thomas’s will continue to have its own Priest for the foreseeable future and our tradition and church practice make a unique contribution to the variety of church provision in the district.

The congregation will be kept informed as talks progress. It is possible that there will be no change at the end of the year of exploration but we believe that mission in Southborough will be more effective if we find a way to move forward together.

Michael Nadin
Churchwarden
7 May 2017

Rev Rachel Wilson
Priest-in-Charge

Eric Wills
Churchwarden

** Suspension of the right of presentation means a new vicar cannot be appointed while parish arrangements are under review but a priest-in-charge may be appointed instead.*

Note read at APCMs in the Southborough Team Ministry and St Thomas

In February 2016 Bishop James suspended the right of presentation * at St Thomas's in order to consider options for pastoral reorganisation of the Anglican churches in Southborough, High Brooms and Bidborough. In February 2017, following the Team Rector's retirement the right to presentation in the Southborough Team was also suspended.

Following a period of review by the Rural Dean, and conversations in both parishes, it is proposed that during 2017 all these parishes explore options for a pattern of effective future ministry in Southborough and Bidborough. This might take the form of one or more of St Lawrence, St Peter, Christ Church, and St Thomas, looking at ministry opportunities across Southborough. St Matthew's will be holding conversations with their neighbouring parishes in Tunbridge Wells.

Following these explorations, proposals for any reorganisation of parishes, in the form of a new grouping of parishes, the formation of a new parish or parishes, or maintaining the status quo, would be drawn up in consultation with all stakeholders, for presentation to the APCM in 2018, thereby giving us a year of working, upon which to base any decision concerning the way forward.

It is proposed that a Joint Working Group comprising Stephen Hills, Rachel Wilson, Nigel Griffiths and two representatives each from Christ Church, St Peter's, St Thomas and St Lawrence (one representing PCC/DCCs and the other ministry/mission teams) meet monthly to consider ways of working together and a range of future options. The representatives from each parish are to be chosen in a way acceptable to respective parishes. A report on these discussions should go to respective parishes and interested parties well ahead of the APCMs in 2018.