



Time to say good-bye to Fiona (sob)! Please come to the party after the 10.30 service at St Mary's

ST MARY'S & ALL SAINTS NEWS

16th July 2017

TRINITY 5

Welcome to our service today! We meet in the name of Jesus Christ to celebrate what he has done for us, to listen to the word of God and to speak to God in prayer. Children are welcome at all of our services! At the 10.30, when it's not an all-age service, there is a crèche called Scramblers (0-3), Explorers (4-7) and Pathfinders (8+). Listen out for announcements about refreshments served after the service.

Services

TODAY:

8.00 Communion at St Mary's

9.20 Matins at All Saints

10.30 Communion at St Mary's

NEXT SUNDAY

8.00 Communion at St Mary's

9.20 Matins at All Saints

10.30 Communion at St Mary's

Contacts

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Volunteers needed:

- A new member of the Godzone team – helping to run the afterschool club on Wednesday afternoons in term-time, 3.00-5.00. No expertise needed except patience and humour!
- Three or four people happy to spend an hour a month, spring to autumn, either strimming or mowing the new churchyard at St Mary's.

To volunteer or to find out more, please speak to Ben.



Saying 'Good-Bye' to Fiona

It's so sad that the time is drawing near to say a fond farewell to Fiona who has served the benefice so sacrificially over the last two years! TODAY there will be a PARTY after the 10.30 service. It's bring and share – bring a plate of food and something to drink and we'll have a great time. There'll be a bouncy castle and lots of fun!





Ben's General Synod Report

As you may be aware, I was away last weekend in York as part of the General Synod of the Church of England, the Church parliament. Some of what we did has been in the media, so I thought I'd offer you a report on what happened and how I voted. On the whole, I'm afraid to say it was a rather depressing weekend which gave the impression of the Church trying to help itself by looking after its own and by passing motions to generate nice headlines in the papers. We discussed clergy welfare and passed a motion to make it

easier for clergy to get places at local schools for their children when they move house, but there was no discussion of the persecution of Christians in other parts of the world (which has seen a rapid increase in the last year), nor was there discussion of the major safeguarding scandals which have dominated the media in the last month. On the positive side, we were presented with some great reports on ministry in parishes where other religions are the majority and on ways in which the national Church is resourcing local mission. Very encouraging!

The two most widely reported items of business were on so-called 'conversion therapy' and the creation of a liturgy to celebrate when someone, to put it crudely, has had a sex change. The Church of England has asked the government to ban therapy aimed at diminishing or changing unwanted attraction to people of the same sex. In the past, this has included horrible treatments including electro-therapy and hormone-therapy. These are rightly no longer practiced in the UK. So the requested ban relates to talking therapies. I voted against this motion for a few reasons. Firstly, I don't think the Church is qualified to make this judgement, which is really a matter for psychiatrists. Secondly, there's no real scientific evidence that purely talking therapies are harmful or that they don't help the people who seek them. Thirdly, this ban will limit what local churches can do to help those in need. If, for example, a married person started to struggle with strong feelings of attraction to a person of the same sex, it would be illegal for the local church to offer pastoral support or prayer to help them overcome those feelings. It seems to me that we've put ourselves in quite a difficult place, ostensibly for a nice headline which will be soon forgotten by the public.

The same could be said for the motion to create a liturgy to welcome transsexual persons, or more technically, people who have suffered from gender dysphoria. This was a motion in two parts. The first was to offer a welcome on behalf of the Church. This is excellent: we want everyone to know that they are welcome at our churches. The second part was to create a special service to welcome transgender people. This seemed to me to be rushed in a desperate attempt to make a story for the media. No real thought had gone into what the Bible might say about this issue. No real thought had gone into what this service might say – is it simply 'welcome to church' or a more complicated 'well done for coming to realise your true gender'. No thought was given to the pastoral context of gender transitions: how families are often torn apart when a parent changes their gender. The Church of England has always been a Church which engages with and encourages the best reflection and scholarship. This motion seemed to reject hard grappling with the issues in pursuit of public image: for that reason I chose to abstain from the vote.

I hope that doesn't seem like too much of a moan! I'm being open with you in sharing a bit of my discouragement with the last weekend. The great news is that Jesus Christ is building his church with all sorts of people: people who struggle with issues of sexual and gender identity and people who don't, people in the cities and people in the countryside, people who follow all the media headlines and people who aren't interested. I can't wait to see what he's going to continue doing in our benefice!