Monday 14 November saw the licensing of the Revd Anne Crawford as Team Vicar at St Matthias by Bishop Richard and with the Archdeacon the Venerable John Kiddle also in attendance. The service brought to an end a challenging period in which there were two vacancies happening at the same time in the parish. Canon Robert Titley had left Richmond Team Ministry the previous November to become Canon Treasurer at Salisbury Cathedral and then the Revd David Gardiner said goodbye to us in March in order to become Chaplain to the Bishop of Gloucester, Rachel Treweek. Although some vacancies can remain unfilled for a year or more, that was fortunately not the case for our parish as the Revd Wilma Roest arrived as Rector and Team Vicar for St Mary at the end of July and the Revd Anne Crawford in November. The clergy team is now complete and we can move forward at last.

Our thanks go to the Revd Neil Summers, Revd Alan Sykes, our readers Gill Doling and Ruth Martin, the churchwardens, our administrators and all who have worked so hard during the vacancies to keep the parish running as normally as possible.

As well as family, friends and clergy colleagues Anne was supported at the service as is traditional by members of the congregation of her former team ministry St George of England, Toddington and All Saints Church Chalgrave both in Bedfordshire. As RTM has experienced over the last year or so with both Robert and David leaving, these services of licensing or installation are always a little sad for the guests from previous parishes as they are saying goodbye to someone much loved, whilst facing a future where they do not know how long the vacancy may last and who will eventually fill it.

The hymns sung at the service were ‘Angel Voices ever Singing’, ‘O Thou who Camest from

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Anne’s Licensing on 14 November

Photo: Chris Harrison
Above’, ‘Just as I am, without One Plea’ and ‘Lord, for the Years’. The Mass setting was St Thomas by David Thorne with the choirs of our three churches coming together to sing.

It is customary at Licensing services for the collection to go to support married candidates for ordination and their families during their training and at Anne’s service the collection went to Ordination Candidates’ Fund.

The service was an inspiring beginning to Anne’s ministry at St Matthias and in the Team.

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The Building Project at St Mary Magdalene

**Peter Bowyer**

The first letter on my Refurbishment Project file is dated 7 January 2011, but in truth work started some time before then, when Robert Titley arrived in the Parish and suggested the facilities at St Mary Magdalene were extremely ‘basic’, and that really the situation should be addressed. To be fair, we were busy working on a programme of external repairs, and internal redecorations, but this intervention was a sea-change in aspirations.

So, we (the Fabric Group and I) consulted, prepared briefs, sketched out ideas, visited other churches – lots of churches – consulted again, and came up with a Plan. Well, several Plans, but we are concentrating at the moment on the Essentials’ Plan: providing better heating, lighting, seating – toilets – better facilities for catering, flower-arranging, and the vestry/sacristy functions.

After much discussion, we decided the toilets should be located in the north porch – tight, but feasible. The heating in the nave and aisles should be ‘underfloor’, for permanent, background (low-level) warmth, with wall-mounted radiators to boost temperatures when necessary. This, and the desire for flexible seating arrangements – already in existence at St John’s and St Matthias’ – led us to conclude that both the pews and the flooring should be replaced. The pews – of pitch-pine, and dating from 1864 – are of no great note historically, nor is the flooring – a mixture of pew-platforms on concrete, York stone paving laid at various times from 1864 through to 2004, and the truncated centre aisle of Victorian quarry tiles. Of more significance are the 30-odd ledger stones of Purbeck, black slate and white marble marking (originally) the last resting places of former Richmond residents: they have been moved around in the past, but at the time of writing it is not clear whether they will retain their current positions.
within the new floor. The new floor is to be finished with Purbeck limestone, lightly-buffed, and from two different 'beds' to provide a contrast to define the architectural spaces, and the perimeters and kerbs of ramps and steps, for example, thereby assisting those with visual impairment. The new seating is to be a combination of portable oak pews in the nave – flexible, but for most of the time replicating the layout of the existing pews; and in the aisles, oak-veneered chairs which, when not required, can be stacked extremely compactly onto trolleys. The catering facilities, temporarily relocated in the All Saints' Chapel, will be reconstructed in oak in the north aisle, and are designed for the serving of tea, coffee, etc and light 'buffet' refreshments. So, when not laid out with seating, or cleared for exhibition space, the north aisle might be in café mode, with tables and chairs. We see the south aisle as more performance-orientated, having discovered that the space and the acoustics suit the piano and small recitals very well. So, we will be building in a drop-down screen, with projection facilities; wiring for portable monitors; and upgrading the sound system generally. And the lighting will be upgraded and extended, keeping but modernising the chandeliers, and providing general and specific lighting at high level, operated centrally on a 'scene-set' method similar to that used at St Matthias'. Other changes, to enable these things to happen: the pulpit is to be rendered moveable; the existing altar dais removed to permit other platform layouts to be tested; and the font relocated to the west end of the nave.

Finally, the All Saints' Chapel will be converted into a new Clergy Vestry/Sacristy/Meeting Room, freeing-up the existing Vestry for the Choir and, operating at different times, the Flower-arrangers. All the changes in the project have been approved in principle by St Mary's Church Committee and PCC.

Over the last three years, we have been progressing the external repairs: repairing and reglazing the aisle and clerestory windows, and giving the internal walls several coats of paint; repairing the stone gables over the chancel and vestry (ongoing); and we start re-slating the north aisle after Easter. And now that we have the first of the many Faculties we need, we have at last been able to start on the first elements of the Refurbishment Project proper – preparing for the installation of those all-important toilets. We are, I think, I hope, finally “on a roll....”.

The cost? At today's prices, about £1.65 million, funded by Richmond Church Charity Estates, and generous donations and legacies. And completion? 2019, barring serious delays.

And what about the Non-Essentials' Plans, I hear you ask? Well, that is a story for another day!
Helen Williams

Alan Sykes

Helen Williams, our Children and Youth Ministry Leader, began work in the Richmond Team Ministry in September 2016. She was brought up on the Blackdown Hills in East Devon and previously worked in the Tiverton area with the Sampford Peverell Team Mission Community. She was recently interviewed for TEAMtalk by Revd Alan Sykes.

How did you come to this role?

I had been working with six rural Parishes and their five Primary Schools, for three years. Additionally, I was involved with a teenage group for young people exploring the Christian Faith, which covered approximately ten villages and worked across the Christian denominations. While working in these roles I completed a Degree in ‘Applied Theology’ (with a focus on Children and Families).

I was looking for a new job, to broaden my experience and one of the retired Vicars who volunteered with the children’s ministry, saw this job advertised and felt it was a good fit for me, with my skills, interests and experience. I reluctantly applied for the job (my reservation being that it was in the big city). Having lived in the country, it was definitely outside of what was comfortable! The only reassurance was all the green space I saw on the map; namely Richmond Park and Kew Gardens! I was invited for interview and it seems that the interview team also felt it was a good fit.

As has happened several times before, my uncertainty turned to peace, when I was open to something new and it felt that God changed my heart.

What does your current work involve?

I am regularly at our two preschool groups; ABC and Eaglets. I alternate between the Sunday Schools at St Mary’s and St Matthias, and then go on to the St John’s Sunday School. We have had a few youth events. There is quite a lot of ‘behind the scenes’ preparation and admin support. We are reviewing our Safeguarding practices and trying to ensure that we are operating as safely and professionally as possible. I want to make sure that volunteers are well supported, have access to the materials they need and know they are appreciated. I attend staff meetings, have received school visits to our churches. There has been a lot of getting to know people both inside and outside the team. I have also spent some time thinking about what our church spaces say about the place of children and families in our churches and asking myself how can we help them to engage and meet with God both in and out of services.

What have been some of the highlights of your first term?

…Where to begin…?!

● ‘Prayer Spaces’ at Christ’s School, which were organised for Advent were a real privilege and joy. They offered something alternative amidst all the busy-ness of Christmas preparation. They also provided somewhere to go for those who were going
to find Christmas especially difficult. It offered staff and pupils a pastoral and reflective space which was rooted in elements of the Christmas story.

- Relationships with the families and learning how much the groups are valued, not least ABC and Eaglets.
- The brilliant volunteers, staff and clergy who are such a gift to work alongside.
- Opportunities that have presented themselves with Duke of Edinburgh Award Volunteers and school visits.

Personally, I am thrilled (and perhaps a little surprised) at how much I am enjoying working and living here and how ‘at home’ I feel. Thank you Richmond Team Ministry! I love how we continually learn and grow in faith – God is never finished with us!

**What are some of your hopes for 2017 in the Richmond Team Ministry?**

- Continuing to seek God’s leading, for the best way forward as we look to pursue our vision; for our Churches to be centres of the Community – offering a welcome and pastoral care and embracing all ages.
- To develop a larger team of volunteers so that we are able to do more and to ensure that the existing team are not over-stretched.
- Getting the Youth Group properly off the ground, with a solid and sustainable programme, which fulfils the needs of our young people.
- Developing relationships with Schools and supporting their religious education but also offering pastoral support and opportunities for individuals to explore and develop their own faith, as appropriate.
- Continuing to get to know the ‘church family’, in its broadest sense.
- Small groups / mentoring for the older youth.
- And finally.... The Knitted Nativity figures were a source of much joy, across the ages. The care shown by eleven people, across the team contributing to make these for the benefit of the children (and adults!) was really wonderful. The children of the regular groups loved playing with them (and moving the shepherds and wise men around the church as we moved towards Christmas Day and Epiphany). There were many adults who also commented how much they enjoyed seeing them and ‘their little characters’, with people visiting the church to look at them. As many know, sadly some of the figures at St. Mary’s ‘disappeared’. While this was really disappointing, I am so encouraged by the willingness of people (across the team) to help replace them – such kindness.

Next year there are plans for the respective knitted Nativities to visit people in their homes and return to church for Christmas Eve. More on this nearer the time, however before then, a Spring and Summer lies before us! Enjoy!

*The three different nativity sets – one from each church*
On 27 and 28 January, Peter and I spent a fascinating and inspirational day and a half in Leicester at the invitation of The Passion Trust, an organisation that provides a little funding but a lot of expertise to anybody who wishes to put on a Passion play.

Thursday evening was purely social, an early supper, then a concert by a magnificent choir from Queen’s College, Oxford, in the ancient Guildhall, some of which dates back to 1390. It was chilly, so the mulled wine in the mayor’s parlour after the concert was very welcome.

On Friday at 9.30 the conference began in earnest. Peter was the first speaker and his talk about the mechanics and growth of our play was warmly and enthusiastically received.

Hornchurch’s offering couldn’t have been more different. They put on their play every five years. It started in 1995 and now has a budget of £30,000, enabling them to spend £10,000 on high end sound equipment. It’s a Son et Lumiere production in modern dress, allowing the images of performers and crowd to blur. Their Roman soldiers are dressed in desert camouflage with red berets, the Sanhedrin in appropriate headdresses but City suits and Pilate is a Mussolini lookalike. Script, moves, auditions and rehearsal schedules are all formal and total, professional commitment is expected. There are three performances on Good Friday, Easter Saturday and Easter Sunday.

They fund-raise over the five year period and there is a bucket collection after the performance which usually raises about £4,000. On average, the audience is around 10,000. Leicester, too has a huge audience but at least half of the conference attendees were aiming to produce a play for the first time, with all the usual feelings of enthusiasm, tempered by apprehension and feelings of isolation.

The Manchester group intends to take their play to a different borough, of which there are ten, every year. Poole’s play is seen through the eyes of a child and Lewes’s play takes place in real time, in different locations over Holy Week (Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.)

Cutting Edge theatre performs in prisons worldwide – Edinburgh, Italy, Brazil. Angola and always hopes to include refugees, the under privileged and homeless people. The Edinburgh production is re-imagined every year.

There were crucial sessions on education, fundraising, social media, press relations, risk assessments and communications with local councils.

Finally, there was a fascinating excerpt from Birmingham’s modern (in every sense) offering. Particularly moving were scenes with Jez and Pete BUT the director and half the cast were professional, the audience paid for their tickets and the cast were paid on a profit share basis.

We thoroughly enjoyed our time in Leicester and came away with lots of ideas and helpful tips. What about a designated space for disabled audience members, for example and/or a signer?
Here we are again, albeit after a three-year gap! The Friars in Aylesford, Kent (www.thefriars.org.uk) is booked and we are preparing for our next Parish Weekend extravaganza. It will be worth the wait! We’re also having a slight change in the time of year – 2017 will see mid-summer meditations.

The organising team is so excited by this year’s theme: Creating God – Exploring theology through the arts. The programme is still being finalised, but it will stimulate, enthral and challenge us through a variety of art forms.

As well as the sessions reflecting on how the arts portray God, we will also have plenty of other opportunities to share spiritual and social activities. You can join in any of the wide-ranging activities, or just spend time yourselves exploring the Priory and its surroundings. We also want the weekend to be a place for families to join the big RTM Family, and there will be a dedicated programme for children. Central to the weekend will be the services that are such an uplifting part of the shared experience.

Richmond is an extraordinary place, and Richmond Team Ministry reflects that specialness both of the location and the people. The Parish Weekends are truly wonderful – the opportunity to meet and get to know people from all three churches. It will also be wonderful to get to know Wilma and Anne some more, and to know Neil even better than we do already!

However, please don’t take our word for it. This is what people have said about some previous Parish Weekends: ‘Wish I did not have to wait two years for it to happen again’; ‘It was a really splendid weekend in all ways’; ‘Impressive, worthwhile and enjoyable’; ‘Friendly and interesting’; ‘Lots to absorb’; ‘Eye-opening’; ‘A gem’; ‘RTM entertainment was “wonderful”’; ‘A happy but at the same time thoughtful weekend’; ‘I love the historic, beautiful, peaceful venue’; ‘Insightful, definitely food for thought’; ‘Everyone relaxed and happy in a beautiful setting’; ‘I thoroughly enjoyed it and appreciated getting to know so many fellow Richmond Christians’; ‘There was a lovely feeling of community within our group even though I didn’t know everyone.’

The booking form is now available at all three churches and it is also online on the RTM website (www.richmondteamministry.org). We will be finalising the full programme shortly.

If you have any questions do please contact Emma Meredith (emeredith@ctpa.org.uk).

The organising team looks forward to seeing its friends from all three churches in Aylesford!
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Our Churches

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