

Rector's Report (June - Dec 2024)

In Early December 2024 I organised a benefice party, hosted at St Mary's Elham to thank all those who volunteer in many different ways in the service and life of the churches across the benefice. It was the only way I could think of to include everyone - from those who are worship leaders, church officers, PCC members, those who help with services, cleaners, flower arrangers, bell ringers, door openers and lockers, those who help with resourcing and organising events. As well as the regular up front work, there are so many who support the work of the church behind the scenes. I want to re-iterate my thanks for your welcome, encouragement and support for me as Rector which is reflected in the service and love you give to your churches and to the wider community.

A regular monthly pattern of services has been established across the benefice to ensure worship and prayer is at the heart of each parish. Without the dedication of the Benefice Ministry Leadership Team (MLT) :Revd Stephen and Revd Sharon, Licenced Lay Readers - Bill, Diana and Janet, Authorised Lay minister -Paul Sharman and Worship Leaders -Mike, Gary, Katherine, Peter and Sarah regular services would not take place. My prayer is that we can encourage congregation members to gather together in smaller prayer groups throughout the week to grow in prayerfulness and obedience to God.

The benefice now has designated Safeguarding Officers (PSOs) in each parish and is committed to doing all we can to be a safe place for all. PSOs and other church officers such as Treasurers, Wardens, PCC Secretaries and MLT have met together. My hope is that we can establish clear ways of working and communicating within our churches and across the benefice.

I am thankful to Janet and Lesley, Lay ministers who lead weekly christian collective worship in each of the benefice schools (Elham, Lyminge and Selsted). I am getting to know each of the schools and this year, schools have come for services at Acrise, Lyminge and Elham. Moving forward, I hope to also have school services at additional churches in the benefice.

I look forward to getting to know you and learning more from your villages in the coming year. There is much I need to learn from you and I count it a privilege to serve the people living within the Elham Valley Benefice and all those who are drawn to our churches at whatever season of life.

Grace, mercy and peace be with you.
Revd Carol Bates

