

Vicar's Letter Autumn 2017



Dear Crofton Parish Community,

I hope you are finding the start to a new academic year a happy one, especially those who have family members starting a new school or school year. This time of year is a good opportunity to reflect on what has happened so far in 2017 and what the months ahead hold. So, I wanted to write to you to thank God for all that's going on in the life of parish and signpost a couple of things that will be coming up in the months ahead.

Vision 2017

As you know, Vision 2017 focussed on WORSHIP, WELCOME, WITNESS.

In prioritising WORSHIP, we have reshaped the pattern of our Sunday services. In January, we relaunched the evening service as 'Ascent', a place to 'go up the mountain of the Lord' in prayer and worship. From Easter, the 11.10 service began preparing to move to St Edmund's, making the Old Church 'home' for this precious congregation. The first 11.10 service at St Edmund's was on Sep 3. I'm delighted to say that the move is going well and I am grateful to all those members of the 11.10 and St Edmund's who have done so much to make it work. St Edmund's will make a lovely home for this valuable congregation for years to come.

In both churches, we continue to make WELCOME a priority. All our congregations are warm, welcoming places. So, please do look out for those who are new and help them to feel at home, as we have new people joining us most Sundays.

The big news for the autumn term is our Alpha course. Alpha is an important part of our WITNESS to our community and beyond and I'm grateful to everyone who has given time and effort to invite others and to help the course run. We are anticipating that the Lord will use this Alpha course in a powerful way to help people discover Jesus for themselves. PLEASE do PRAY for those running the course and the guests attending!

We knew that we faced a significant financial stretch when we launched Vision 2017 in January. To break even this year, we needed to meet a deficit of £25,000. Even with some unexpected costs (the centre dishwasher broke and the trees around Holy Rood need work), that gap has reduced to nearer £7,000. The giving from the 2016 Gift Day means that we will break even this year. This is something to praise God for! Thank you for your generosity.

The Staff Team

No organisation is stronger than the team that leads it. In the last year, getting to know the staff team has been a wonderful part of my job. There have already been some changes to the team – saying goodbye to Steve Marsh was a big change – and there will be more in the months ahead.

Beth Yeandle has now finished as Children and Families Worker. I am grateful for all her hard work and the excellent foundation she has laid in our midweek work with families and our Sunday morning children's groups. Happily, Beth isn't going anywhere. She will be continuing on the staff

team in an unpaid capacity overseeing Training & Discipleship. This is a new area of ministry but one that should grow our capacity as a parish to serve the Lord and bless our community. The PCC and I are prayerfully considering how we replace Beth as Children & Families Team Leader in this important role. At present, Beth is still around and Gill Nolan is kindly supporting Heather Brown with our groups.

Alongside Beth, Sue Elgie is joining the staff team as my PA. Sue has been in this role for nearly a year now and makes such a difference running my diary and supporting me with projects. Kathryn England is also joining the team to oversee Worship and Festivals. Kathryn has many years' experience as a worship leader and is going to work alongside our brilliant group of musicians to encourage and support them. I am so grateful to both Sue and Kathryn for being willing to give their time to serve the Parish.

One final change to note is that Colin Prestidge's job title is changing. Colin has been part of the team since 2004, so referring to him as a Curate seems a little out of date. He and I feel it would make much more sense for him to be called 'Assistant Minister'. Colin is such a valuable member of our team, through preaching and leading, offering pastoral support and contributing across a wide range of areas. I am really delighted that this change can mark a new season in Colin's ministry in Crofton Parish.

I will be sharing exciting news about new Curates soon. Please do continue to pray for the staff team, including those I haven't mentioned, who give so much to help our Parish be faithful to the Lord's calling.

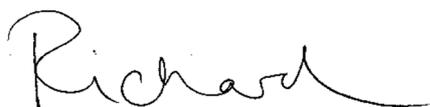
Looking to the Future

I've been Vicar of Crofton Parish for just over a year. The time is right to look ahead to what God has for us. During this term, I will be meeting with the staff team, Wardens and PCC to identify key areas for development and prayerfully considering what God is calling us to in the years ahead. It is my hope this term to develop a 3 year vision ready to be launched in January 2018. In the meantime, do pray for the staff team, Wardens and PCC during this crucial stage of planning and discernment.

Finally, thank you for being part of the wonderful work that God is doing in and through Crofton Parish. My particular thanks to the many volunteers who serve the Lord in so many ways through our Parish. As we pray, gather, serve, belong and give, we become a community in which God is present by his Spirit and through which God can bless those around us, helping others discover Jesus for themselves.

So, let's pray faithfully, gather joyfully, serve lovingly and give generously, for we belong to the Lord and to each other. In this, we become that house built with 'living stones' that points to our Maker and Redeemer, Jesus.

In love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev Richard England
Vicar, Crofton Parish