

On the Feast of Epiphany, which we celebrated on Sunday 4th January, we bade a fond farewell to Helena as she retired from her role of Vicar of our parish. The church was full as many came to show their appreciation for her many years of faithful service to the church, to our schools and to the community, and for all the support and kindness she has shown to those going through hard times. Many also attended the surprise party at Findon Place the previous Friday. Instead of a bouquet of flowers, Helena was presented with a rather nice olive tree for her new home in Findon Village as her old home in Durrington had an ancient one in the back garden that they had to leave behind. Helena was also presented with a substantial cheque from the many gifts that had been received. The party almost didn't happen though, as it was originally planned for 9th January and at the last-minute Helena's family in Australia booked flights for her and for Chris, her husband, to go out on the 5th January. There was a lot of rearranging to do and Caroline at Findon Place very kindly came to the rescue. The party was a great success with a wonderful spread of food provided by many people from across the three villages. We shall all miss Helena and Chris but they are not going far, that is, when they get back from considerably warmer climes, and I'm sure we will still regularly see them walking Tilly, their dog, around Findon.

The work of the church goes on as before, and the services will take place as usual. This includes Messy Church that meets in Findon Village Hall on the first Tuesday of the month. The Church Office will be open as usual on Mondays, 8am to 11am, and Fridays, 8am to 2pm, ably staffed by Wendy our Administrator. If you need to get in contact with the church office outside those times you can leave a message on the Rectory phone or by email and they will be picked up on a regular basis. As I am the Associate Vicar of the Parish many people have assumed I will be taking over from Helena. This is actually not the case, as I have been appointed to a supporting role. As the position of Vicar is now in vacancy it is actually the Church Wardens who run the parish, though I am available to take services and to be there for anyone who would like to speak to me.

Easter is very early this year (5th April) so we begin our Lenten observance early too, with Ash Wednesday falling on 18th February. Although we might not think of Lent as something to look forward to, I personally find it a very useful time of reflection and preparation for Easter. Used well, it can be a time to take stock, which I think we all need in our busy lives. Fasting is optional (!) but some people find that focuses the mind and has its benefits, providing any savings are put to good use.

Wishing you a very belated Happy New Year and a blessed Lent.

Colin

Colin Cox

Associate Vicar.