

As I write this article, the first signs of spring are starting with lots of snow-drops and daffodils beginning to bloom, and yet more rain is due to fall. It is now almost two months since Helena's retirement and I know she is enjoying a lot of sun and heat at the moment; it is a shame she can't send some of it our way.

As church warden for St John the Baptist, it is my job to ensure the church keeps running as normal until a new priest can be appointed, all services are fully covered, and all activities we normally carry out continue. I am personally very pleased that Colin, our associate Vicar still takes many of the services at all three of our parish churches, and I am only responsible for booking priests when he is unavailable, double-booked or needs time off. Much easier than some churches going in to a vacancy, who don't have an associate Vicar to help.

I am sad we no longer have Helena as priest in charge, but understand she needed to retire, and I am looking to the future for a new priest to lead us on. A vacancy is seen as a learning curve, initially grieving the loss of the retired priest; a contemplative phase, where we think of who we are as a parish and where we would like to be; then finally we can get down to deciding on the type of priest we would like. This would be in consultation with parishioners, the wardens of the other churches in the parish, and with the PCC. It is very likely that we would have a joint priest with Findon Valley, and so their PCC and parishioners would also have a say.

The reason we would share a priest is simply that as a parish we are only entitled to a part-time priest, which is actually what Helena was. She worked above and beyond what she was meant to, and acted like a full-time priest, something we were all thankful for. Findon Valley also had a part-time priest, and so by us sharing, we would get a full time one instead. We are in a much better position to get a priest for a full-time position than for a part time one. How this will work out long term, I don't know, but as we move forward we will get a much better idea of how things will work out. We will still have two separate parishes initially, and two separate PCCs, but this may change.

If you want to hear more, please come to our 10am service on 8th March when Archdeacon Tom is taking the service, and he will be available to answer questions. We are looking at a year to 18 months for a new priest to be appointed - things don't move quickly.

On a polite note, when you park in the road by our church, whether that is to go to church, or simply to walk in the beautiful countryside, please can you park carefully on the left-hand side facing down the lane to the exit. Keep all four wheels on the road and not on verges or embankments. Due to all the rain, these areas are very soft and can be damaged very easily. This road belongs to Caroline Hill, the owner of Findon Place, and we simply have right of access, so we want to be good neighbours. Thank you for your understanding.

Simon Knights
Churchwarden
St John the Baptist, Findon