

Report of St Mary's Church, Twyford 2018/19

In June 2018 we welcomed Rev. Damon Draisey as the new vicar to the Benefice of Twyford, Owslebury, Morested and Colden Common, resident in Colden Common. His emphasis since taking up post has been to try to bring the work of the Church across the four churches together, and has started regular Benefice-wide Parish Council Meetings, introduced a new name for the Benefice, the 'South Downs Gateway Benefice', with a new logo, and will shortly launch a new email and website of www.sdgateway.org.uk. The pewsheet, which is our major internal information vehicle, will also be standardised across the Benefice from this month.

The attendance at regular services is steadily declining, as it is across the country, although Messy Church and 'Special Services' at Christmas and Easter continue to be well supported. Damon and our other supporting clergy in the village (Peter Lippiett and Val Corcoran, who contribute as able) will be putting their energies into inclusive and child-focussed activities and services, including supporting our Church of England School, here in the village, as well as the other schools in the Benefice.

We are fortunate to have inherited from our predecessors a peal of 8 bells, and in an effort to ensure the ancient art of bell ringing continues to be available to villagers, there is a relaunch of the 'Bells Appeal'. This will make sure they are easier to ring and more tuneful, to be attractive to listeners and bell-ringers from near and far.

The general reduction in the numbers of the congregation continues to give concern as to how to continue to fund the church building, and ensure that this, the largest public building in the village, is used and valued by the villagers, even if the numbers envisaged when it was built, no longer attend church services.

The heating system continues to give concern, and while church funds have been used to ensure the building continues to be heated, it will be necessary to renew the pipework (100 years old) before too long, and this will enable the building to be used more flexibly in future. This project is currently being developed by the PCC to ensure that the proposals for the new system will be as efficient and effective as possible, but it will not be possible to implement it from existing PCC funds.

The churchyard has continued to be cleared and improved by the activities of the 'Grass Cutting Fund' and local volunteers, and the PCC continues to be grateful for all this support.

The Parish Council donated £300 last year for the renovation of a small noticeboard outside the church. I am pleased to report that this has just been completed by Colden Common Shed and was replaced outside the church last week, for which we are very grateful.