



**ASHFORD TOWN PARISH
MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM RECTOR
DECEMBER 2020**

The church year starts with Advent, which means it starts with watching, waiting, and listening for God's coming. That can feel like a challenge in the midst of all the preparations and events filling the December days in the run up to Christmas. This year, we may have less to do than usual, but many of us will be feeling uncertain and anxious as the effects of the global pandemic continue. In a different way, that can also make it difficult to find the stillness we need to watch, wait, and listen.

Since starting as Team Rector back in October, I've been trying to watch, wait, and listen: listen to people who know our Parish and can help me understand it, watch for what God may be doing here in Ashford, and wait for the way forward to become clear. In a year's time, will our churches look quite different from how things were in February, or will they have gone back to being much the same, or will we be somewhere in between? Are there new things God is calling us to do, or do we need to persevere faithfully with responsibilities we have already been given, or could it be about doing some of both?

I've started to share some initial reflections about that in meetings with the Core Ministry Team, the PCC, and Local Leadership / Management Teams. Crucially, I believe it's time for us to think and pray together as a Parish about how we are called to share in God's mission here in Ashford. I know that much good work has been done in different Local Areas, but we need to join that up and ask what the vision is for the Parish as a whole. So I'll be working with the Core Ministry Team and the PCC on how we can do some watching, waiting, and listening together in 2021. I pray that's something every member of the church here can contribute to.

Of course, there will still be all kinds of urgent tasks for us next year. We are likely to have to keep adjusting to a changing situation with Coronavirus in 2021. We will need to attend to on-going repairs to our church buildings and some major development projects as well. And we know our current financial situation is simply not sustainable: something has to change. But in the midst of all this, we need to find that place of stillness: to watch, wait, and listen. God is at work, and God calls us to be part of what he is doing.

It's still very early days for me as Team Rector. I'm so grateful for the welcome we have received in the Parish here, and so impressed by the rich combination I've been experiencing of different communities and different people, with so many amazing gifts. I know I have much more to learn, and so my plan is to spend some time with each church in the first half of next year. I hope that means there will be opportunities for me to meet and share with you, as we watch, wait, and listen together for what God may be saying to us.

'Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.' (Ps 24.5)

The Revd Canon Dr Jeremy Worthen