

# ***The Parishes of the Purbeck Hills Benefice Let us Talk***

Three parishes make up the benefice. St. George's Langton Matravers, St. James Kingston and St. Nicholas of Myra Worth Matravers where services are held each week. There is a chapel – St. Aldhelm's on the coast, part of the parish of Worth Matravers, where services are held on special occasions. Services are also held once a month at Harmans Cross Village Hall (also in Worth parish). The result is that we are able to provide a range of services for the people in our villages. The main church buildings are also in geographically central locations.

The three parishes are 'rural village' in character and there is a Church School in Langton Matravers. Not only do we serve our own people but we are situated in a holiday area and so we also serve the people who come to stay. All three main churches are supportive of each other. There is a Benefice service once a month, usually at St. George's (which has the largest congregation), but joint patronal festivals are supported in each church as they occur through the year.

*We will answer the questions put to us by Bishop Nicholas in sequence but separately for each parish.*

## ***What is the personality of our Church?***

**StG.** We work hard to be a warm and welcoming church, on which visitors frequently comment. We try to be inclusive and to reach out to the community outside our walls. Working to enrich the spiritual life of the residents and staff at the nearby retirement home for example. We aim to give 10% of our income to charity and regularly hold events to support local and foreign causes. We are willing to learn and explore our faith. The congregation age is mainly over 60 and there are few families. We have a variety of services ranging from 1662, Common Worship, Informal Worship, Hosanna and Cafe Church.

**StJ.** We are a small but welcoming congregation made up mainly of people living outside of the village, worshipping in a beautiful, very large Victorian church. Few of the village residents attend the church services, but the building on the top of the hill is regarded by many as a beacon, a place they can look to and find comfort from. As a place it is very important to the village, and when there are problems with the building villagers are very supportive. About 50% of the village are second homes, and therefore empty for much of the year. The church being a beautiful and prized building in a lovely village does draw a lot of tourists in. It apparently sits at the junction of two very strong lay lines, and we have regular visits from several people

who are particularly interested in the church building for this reason. The church represents an era that is very much in the past, but the few who faithfully worship there are determined to find ways of keeping the church building, and the faith it upholds relevant to both the villagers and visitors.

### ***St. Nicholas of Myra, Worth Matravers***

St. Nicholas is a small Norman church, well-loved and welcoming, where people of all nationalities have come to worship and feel the peace of God. There is a small and elderly congregation in a holiday resort village where 50% of the houses are second homes.

### ***What are the priorities of our Church?***

***St. Georges, Langton.*** To enable the congregation to grow in their faith, so that they may continue to serve the community in the most significant and knowledgeable way. Also to work together to ensure that our services and whatever else we do, meets the needs of as many people as possible.

To be seen by the local community as a leader in faith and charity.

***St. James, Kingston.*** To stay connected with God, with each other, with the villagers and visitors and with the other churches in the Benefice. To improve our prayer life. To maintain a regular pattern of worship

To maintain the church building and keep it open.

***St. Nicholas, Worth.*** Welcoming visitors, supporting charities, outreach into the area using St Aldhelms Head, (the chapel on the cliff top), and Harmans Cross village hall for ecumenical services i.e. extra to church. Trying to be good neighbours in local communities - serving mobile library users with 'Coffee Junction', maintenance of church and chapel.

### ***Is there one thing we would like to take on this year, even if it meant dropping something else.***

***St.G.*** Try to provide a time in church but not on Sundays when parents and children can come to learn more about God in a fun and interesting way.

***St.J.*** To find ways to develop and enhance our ministry through the occasional offices, particularly marriage. We would like to maintain the contact we have with couples after their wedding day, and ensure that even if they do not have an active

faith they will still feel they are connected to God through their experiences at St. James'.

**St. Nicholas, Worth** - Developing the spiritual side of life in the Benefice where community action is excellent. Start Prayer Parties: share simple food, our faith, and pray afterwards. Quiet Days.

### ***Are there ways we can work together to achieve more?***

**St.G.** Really focusing on Special Sundays and other important religious festivals. Making sure the services are fulfilling to anyone new coming to them and promote them in every way possible.

Pray without ceasing and ensure that the communication between ourselves is the best it can be and focused on what God calls us to do.

If the 'we' in the question refers to the whole Church, powerful and thoughtful help in combating negative messages coming from scientists, ardent secularists and growing antagonism in some sections of the public, which puts off potential new people who might join the Church.

**St.J.** Develop our link with the other churches in the Benefice for joint events and services. More social and spiritual events that will link the Church and village together. We are struggling and need help.

**St.N.** Already involved in Benefice projects i.e. Lent course, Fellowship groups and supporting each other in functions throughout the year: Lent Lunches etc. be aware of spiritual activities in the area, publicise and support.

### ***How can we best measure the quality and impact of church life?***

**St. G.** By the fruit we see from the actions we take. For example - more people being involved in the life of the Church, the establishment of a vibrant, inclusive Home Group and soon to be seen - residents from the retirement home being brought to Church.

**St.J.** Are more people joining us? Are people coming more frequently? Are we making regular contact with the housebound?

**St.N.** In a loving and caring church community. What about sharing what is going on, feedback from individuals about projects, and thanking God for what HE is doing. i.e. Pre-school service, Coffee Junction, and other occasions, churches to watch out for people who will give a testimony, and thanking God for them.