

Benefice planning group

S. Aidan's S. John's S. Paul's

Bulletin 1

5th June 2022

At the invitation of Fr. Michael Freeman, Fr. Robin Trotter and Fr. Phillip Jefferies, Richard & Charles Dean have agreed to lead a group comprising the wardens of the churches of S. Aidan's (Lynda Cooper), S. John's (Neville Fowler & Debbie Wood) and S. Paul's (John Woolley & Sue Ganley) plus a non-PCC member of each congregation (talk to one of your wardens if you'd like to be that member!) to discuss the future of the parishes and their incumbents. The group will keep everyone informed by publishing one of these bulletins after each of their monthly meetings.

We need this group because it is the clear intention of the diocese to re-structure these parishes. This is because of the difficult finance and staffing issues facing the Church of England everywhere as congregations decline.

Subject to consultation and agreement the diocese intends that:

1. The parishes of S. Modwen's and S. Aidan's with S. Paul's will be separated
2. A "House for duty priest" will be sought for S. Modwen's. (A House for duty priest may be retired or have another job but gets a free house in exchange for approximately 2 days' work in

their parish each week, plus Sundays.)

3. S. Aidan's church will close, in the next 12 months probably. In the future the intention is that there will be some sort of midweek ministry in the local community hall.
4. When Fr. Michael Freeman retires next year the parishes of S. John's and S. Aidan's with S. Paul's will become a joint benefice with a shared incumbent.

Our group will look at things that need solving to make this possible. For example, currently Sunday Mass is at 9.30am at S. Paul's and 10.00am at S. John's which makes it impossible for one incumbent to celebrate Sunday Mass in both churches! We will also look at opportunities that the new arrangements could offer.

We will also have to consider how the parishes will cope with reduced clergy numbers both now and in the future: Fr. Duncan Gorwood leaves in August to take up his new post in Brisbane and Fr. Michael Freeman is due to retire in the New Year. Until a new incumbent is appointed (which could take some time) this could just leave two retired priests (i.e., Fr. Phillip Jefferies and Fr. Stanley Monkhouse) and Fr. Robin Trotter (assisted, when he is able, by Fr. Hamish Ferguson-Stuart) covering both S. John's and S. Paul's!

We hope you've found this bulletin helpful and informative. If you have any comments or suggestions after reading this, please contact your wardens.