

## A View from the Rectory ...

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A very Happy Christmas and New Year to you!

After the lovely Licensing Service in October, I am absolutely delighted to be celebrating Christmas with you and look forward to all that 2018 will bring.

Over this next year we look ahead to the re-ordering of the church, which will create a much more flexible, usable space in the nave. Phase 1, the new dais with the specially designed Communion rail will be in place for Christmas, with Phase 2 starting in January and being complete in time for Easter. Our time worshipping in the Church Hall will provide much opportunity for us to think about how we want to use the new space once we return to the church in March.

Other challenges for 2018 are welcoming members of All Saints' Rampton as we become a united parish (Cottenham with Rampton), and thinking about how we grow the church, both in depth of faith and in number. Three new Action Groups are being formed: one looking at how we help each other to grow in our faith; another looking at how we help people come to faith; and the last focusing on how the church can be best resourced to grow in faith and numbers. As you'd expect a vicar to be, I am passionate about reaching out to those who do not yet know Jesus, particularly the younger generations. If you think back to the age you were when you first made a commitment to follow Christ, it's likely to have been before you were aged 25 (this is the case for 85% of all Christians). But when you discover that nationally, under 25s make up a mere 5% of most church congregations, you realise the enormity of the task. All of the research about what makes churches grow tells us that we have to focus on children, young people and families as they are the group currently missing from our churches, but we also know that we have to meet the needs of older folk who have been the mainstay of church congregations for many years. I love worship that is more relaxed and contemporary, but I also love the awe and wonder of traditional worship. The key seems to be about doing both well and reaching out to people of *all* ages. The fact that the Ely Diocese is also serious about church growth was a key factor in my decision to apply for the post of Priest in Charge, so I look forward in 2018 to working with you all, celebrating what we do well, and thinking about what we could do differently in the future to grow the church, both in number but also in depth of faith.

But we know that we can't do any of this without God. Whilst it's our responsibility to produce the conditions for growth, to make our church as welcoming as we can - we are *utterly* dependent on God for its growth and we therefore need to be alert to what he might be saying to us. Through prayer, we need to listen to God for new plans and direction, and



pray to him for their success. I think it's a very exciting time to be a Christian, and an even more exciting time to be a Church leader. Every period of decline in the history of the church has been followed by periods of growth and renewal, so there's much to be positive about! On that note, I leave you with a New Year poem I came across on the Internet. The author is unknown but the sentiment true – we are indeed blessed to tread the path of this New Year in the presence of our God.

### **His Unfailing Presence**

Author Unknown

Another year I enter  
Its history unknown;  
Oh, how my feet would tremble  
To tread its paths alone!  
But I have heard a whisper  
I know I shall be blest;  
"My presence shall go with thee,  
And I will give thee rest."

What will the New Year bring me?  
I may not, must not know;  
will it be love and rapture,  
Or loneliness and woe?  
Hush! Hush! I hear His whisper;  
I surely shall be blest;  
"My presence shall go with thee,  
And I will give thee rest."