

# All Saints', New Haw

## Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2024

### Vicar's Report

I was licensed as Priest-in-Charge of All Saints', New Haw on Friday 5 May. (This was the second attempt, by the way. We had included the licensing in the service at St John's the previous Sunday but it turned out to be illegal as it had not taken place on the day the licence began – 1 May.) This interim measure remained in place until 8 October when, in a joint service at St John's, I was licensed as Vicar of the newly united benefice of West Byfleet and New Haw. In the meantime Annabelle and I had moved in the Vicarage at the end of June. So I am still quite a new boy really, still getting to know my way round All Saints' and around New Haw.

Shall I risk reporting my first impressions? The first is that you are a most warm and welcoming group of people. The second is that you combine a strong commitment to serious discipleship and Christian service with a most generous and inclusive outlook. This is not as common as one would hope! The third is that you really are remarkably well-organised and so many of you play an active part in the life of the church. At the day-to-day level you hardly need me at all! Now would be a good time to pay tribute to you all, but I will single out those whose leadership was so crucial in the interregnum and whose contribution remains so important, Church wardens Linda Salt and Ilana Hill and Revd Jenny Philips. Let me say how grateful I am for the support of everyone here in this first year, but especially of these three I have just named.

My own skills are most obviously in strategy and big picture thinking and I still work on these themes with churches and dioceses in other parts of the Church of England. It was natural to me to lead a process of developing a vision and strategy for All Saints' and we commenced on that task in September last year. We set up a steering group comprising Linda Salt, Phil Bailey, Lyn Taylor, Michael Webb, Ilana Hill, Jenny Phillips, Michelle Fenn and myself. The steering group met on several Saturdays for three hour sessions before producing a proposal which was shared with the PCC in January 2024. The proposal was then shared with the congregation at a meeting open to all at the end of January. Some small amendments were made and the strategy adopted by the PCC in March. Today we formally launch it as the vision and strategy for this church.

I will set out some of the key features of the vision and strategy.

Our purpose. We are 'Called to serve Christ and our community'

Our values:

We are 'Confident in God's love and grace

And 'inclusive and non-judgmental'

We value 'Praying, listening and questioning'

And 'Faith, fellowship and kindness'

### *Our vision for the next few years*

We remain a church which gives everyone a warm and friendly welcome – including those who might feel marginalised in the wider community.

Participation in worship provides a real sense of being in the house of God

Our activities help us to find and point to Christ at work among us and in the world around us.

People see God at work through this church

Developing our partnership with St John's so we can do more by working together

Serving our community

*With new offers:*

- Developing work with young people and families including: e.g.
  - Toddlers' praise service
  - Dedicated worker – a medium to long term goal
  - Services for the neuro-diverse
- Using the church building's possibilities – services emphasising stillness (e.g. Taize, meditation etc.)

*Increasing and developing the activities we host and partnerships with community groups: e.g.*

- Doing more with the café – e.g. more diverse group of users, more publicity
- Working in partnership with the library and other community groups such as Holme Farm
- Visiting and developing partnerships with schools

*Developing our worship and our own life: e.g.*

- A regular healing service
- Enquirers group

## *Actions for 2024*

Explore possibilities for café

Develop café worship

Establish working partnership with St John's

Experiments in quieter worship

Revamp website

Develop relationships with schools and community groups

Develop approach to Toddlers Praise

Service for the neuro-diverse

Invite church groups to review their activities

No doubt this will change a bit as we go. Life keeps changing after all. But we have a guide that will help us as seek to discern and follow the leading of the Spirit over the next few years. We have a sound base here even if, like so many churches, we'd like more money and people. By God's grace this will be the beginning of a new phase of life and growth not just for us, but for New Haw.

Meanwhile, I conclude by remembering that the ordinary life and worship of the church continues week by week, assisted and enabled by our excellent ministers, servers, sidespeople and AV specialists. I acknowledge and thank those who look after our money, our buildings and maintain the practical life of the church in many other ways. We – I – are so grateful to you all. As part of that routine life I report that we conducted 4 baptisms, 0 marriages and 12 funerals in 2023.

Revd Keith Elford

21 April 2024