

The Benefice of
St Mary the Less, Chilbolton
St Mary's Crawley
St Catherine's Littleton
St Stephen's Sparsholt
St Peter and Holy Cross, Wherwell

Praying for our Benefice, the Interregnum and a New Incumbent

O Christ for whom we search,
our help when help has failed:
give us courage to expose our need,
and ask to be made whole
in your healing love;
That being touched by you,
we may be raised to new life,
in the power of your holy name. Amen.

Prayer for the Recruitment and appointment of a new incumbent:

- Pray for the team, representing all our five parishes, putting together a benefice profile and person specification, considering the particular gifts, attributes and vision we would like to see in our new minister.
- Pray for those who will be charged with appointing our new incumbent here in the Downs benefice, for the short-listing of any applicants and subsequent interviews.
- Pray that God will already be preparing the heart and mind of the one who He has planned to call to lead our Benefice, and that they will respond to His call to serve Him in this place.

Prayer for the Downs Benefice Ministry Team:

- Give thanks for our current Ministry Team – retired clergy, Licensed Lay Ministers and lay worship leaders (Bruce Kington, Charlotte Nash, Alan Disher, Andrew Kent, Alastair Barron, Sally Wesley, Carol Coleman).
- Uphold them as they may take on extra responsibilities and services during the interregnum.

Prayer for our Benefice Administrator:

- Pray for Caroline as she continues to perform such a demanding job of administration in the benefice.
- Not only the administrator who prepares service rotas, books weddings, Baptisms and Funerals, Caroline is the first point of contact in the Benefice for **any** enquiries. Pray for continuing wisdom, patience and endurance.

Prayer for our parishes and church families:

- Pray for our Church Wardens, PCCs (Parochial Church Councils) and Benefice Council as they continue to maintain our church buildings, run church services, meetings and activities, ensure safeguarding, health and safety, day-to-day finances and longterm strategy, amongst so much else.
- Pray for each of the five village congregations, that all will be loving and forgiving and be drawn closer to God and each other during the time of interregnum, offering their particular gifts and skills for the building up of God's kingdom in the Downs benefice.

Prayer for our local community

- Pray for the nursing and care homes in our parishes, especially Flowerdown and Westholme in Littleton, where Revd Jax has been visiting, leading services, bringing Holy Communion to the bed-bound, and providing an end-of-life service.
- Pray for the primary schools in Sparsholt and Wherwell, where Revd Jax has built good working relationships and supported worship and the deepening of faith in the lives of the children.
- Pray that those who would turn to the church and our minister in times of need will find hope, support and prayer provided by our church families and Ministry Team, supported by clergy from the Deanery.

Prayer for ourselves:

- Pray for ourselves, that we may be united in God's purposes and generous with our support and love for one another.

1 Thessalonians 5: 12, 13, 16-24.

Paul's final instructions to the church in Thessalonica

'Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.'

Gracious God, you not only meet us with love in Christ, but you also call us to be like Christ as your disciples. Help us to put you first before all others and all things; and to follow the self-emptying way of the cross, so that we make a difference in the world for good and for your glory.

Amen