

Dear Friends,

As you read this, Lent Groups at St Mark's will already have begun. I am delighted by how many people have signed-up to follow the course *Strangers Recognised*. The course has been designed by a group within the diocese to help parishes think, on a spiritual level, how we could better turn outward in mission.

Last November many of you will remember having read my letter about how the PCC had met together to consider the 'Seven Marks of a Healthy Church'. I asked you, then, to pray about St Mark's response to that challenge – how we might become 'healthier'. You may have wondered where that initiative had disappeared to – are we still following it through?

The answer is, 'Yes'. And using this Lent course is part of the work of carrying that strand of thinking on. Other ways in which we are doing it is that in the PCC meetings we are debating, each time, some of the recommendations which arose from the PCC's original study day on the 'Seven Marks of a Healthy Church'. We intend to implement ideas in practical form within the life of the church. Elsewhere in *Seek* you will read of how the PCC in February discussed the issue of 'welcome' in our church, and some initiatives we hope to carry forward. I shall be talking more about these at the APCM on the 16th March. Do come and share in that.

Another thing we plan to do, with regard to the 'Seven Marks of a Healthy Church' is to have a sermon series on them between Easter and Pentecost. We would like to get as many members of the congregation as possible involved in this thinking – as to how we might be 'healthier', and better turned outward in mission.

Meanwhile, we continue our life in a setting in which the church seems embroiled in strife and controversy. Whether it is internationally (the Anglican Communion), nationally (controversy over statements by the Archbishop of Canterbury) or locally (Trumpington), there is a lot of pain around. I cannot address all these issues here, but I do invite you all to pray for the people most involved in controversy – to pray with charity and imagination – and to hold fast with confidence to Christ who is our truth and peace, even in the midst of a church which is all too obviously flawed and weak.

Your friend and vicar,

Maggie Guite