

The Vicar's Letter

Dear Friends,

This is the time of year when we warmly welcome many new faces to Newnham, as the University year begins. Here at St Mark's we wish all those visiting or settling here a very happy and fruitful time in Cambridge. We would like everybody in this neighbourhood to feel that the church is here 'for you' – and by 'the church', we mean all the people who belong to St Mark's, the staff and other team members, the church building itself which is left as much as possible unlocked as a place of peace and quiet, the services of worship which we regularly share there, and our Community Centre which hosts such a wide variety of classes and other activities. Our aim is to be a community which is inclusive and local, where Christianity is lived-out as a welcoming faith for all. Do come along and give us a try. Or, if you are someone who has been a worshipper in the past, but has somehow 'dropped out', please give church another try. Elsewhere in this magazine you will find an invitation to our All-age Harvest Festival Service on the 7th October: you might find that an occasion on which you would particularly like to join us.

I hope newcomers to Newnham will all have received a 'welcome pack' from somebody visiting you on behalf of the church; the pack contains various information leaflets, a further letter from me, and a tiny gift. The information leaflets are also available separately in the church from the stand in the Narthex. Please come and browse there, and look at the notice boards, whenever you like – we are sent posters about many interesting events in and around Cambridge, which we put up in the Narthex. And in the church building itself, we are developing a 'corner' with resources for private prayer, including a reproduction of an ancient icon, some books and cards to aid praying, and the use of either chairs or a prayer stool. Please use it if you think it will be helpful.

Among those whom we shall be welcoming into our congregation this autumn are some ordinands from Ridley Hall and Westcott House. Sylvester Liyanage is in his third year at Ridley, and lives with his wife Lovisa in the Maisonette next to the Vicarage. Sylvester will be on attachment with us for this coming academic year, doing some Sunday duties, in the same way that Mark James is 'attached' here already. Sylvester originates from Sri Lanka, but is being sponsored for ordination-training by the diocese of Southwark, in which he was working before coming to Cambridge. Lovisa comes from Sweden. Welcome to them both.

Paul Dominiak from Westcott is going to be doing a 'placement' for one term, which means that as well as coming on Sundays, he will be doing work around the parish for a couple of days a week. So don't be surprised if he comes to visit you... At the time of writing, I haven't met him, but rumour tells me he's from the North of England. Welcome to him, as well. And welcome to all our student members returning after the long vacation.

On a personal note, the new academic year opens a new chapter for me, as I am to become a Pro-Proctor in the University of Cambridge on the 1st October (with the expectation of being Senior Proctor in the following year, and Deputy Proctor the year after that). This means that as well as my church duties I shall have various university commitments, and you may see me around town in some rather strange garb. I have been put forward for this ancient office by Girton, my old college, and am both honoured and intrigued to be taking it on. As you know, my appointment at St Mark's is a half-time one, so I had always thought I might find some other 'employment' to fit in with it, though I wasn't quite sure what vacancy I might be qualified to apply for since my academic qualifications are very 'rusty', and my administrative skills none too strong. The opportunity to be a proctor came totally as a surprise. I hope that my university duties won't clash too much with church ones, although they do include occasional attendance at University Sermons on Sunday mornings, which means I feel even more blessed than before in having Marguerite as a colleague who can set me 'free' to do that. The greatest concentration of proctorial duties will be in the summer, when I have to share in 'walking the examination rooms' and then, later, attend at Degree

Congregations. So, for those few weeks, you may see less of me than usual. Meanwhile, I am pondering the significance of the fact that the word 'Proctor' is abbreviated from 'Procurator' – which means I shall carry the same title as Pontius Pilate! What does one make of that?

With best wishes to you all,

Your friend and vicar,

Maggie Guite