

**The Vicar's New Year Message 2020 for the Parishes of Powick and
Guarlford, Madresfield with Newland**

Dear all

January 2020

Around this time of a new year, in chapels and churches around the country, Methodists would recommit themselves to their faith in a Covenant service. I do sometimes wish that we could, in the Church of England, import some of the lovely faith inducing or affirming services of our non-established church brothers and sisters. The point of the Covenant approach is to affirm, in a deeply personal way, your faith and role within your church each and every year. New Year Resolution ++. So, if we did such a service across the Old Hills Malvern Churches, how would YOU respond?

Last Pentecost, I "launched" a parish review. To be honest, I shot the bolt too early. I needed more time to get to know you, and you to get to know me. We also needed to reconnect with the communities in which we are a part more – individually, as families as churches. So, what has this review come up with? Not a lot. We are beginning a period of reflection: the PCCs have considered topics such as our worship and our buildings and the vexed issue of how we can be more attractive to all that we serve, not just the 2% of the population locally that might come to church. I haven't abandoned the Communication's Review, I have merely watched from afar as our social media presence has been reacted with and how our website is becoming embedded. We will need to look at the findings of some form of communications review for sure. Meanwhile, I have learnt that it is very easy and quick to use social media, and with a few keystrokes, I can reach out to (on one website) over 2600 people. The trick is, to get people to *Like or Share/engage* with what we are doing: not just look at it. I hope that will work for our much needed new Family Service that will be launched soon with the help of ISingPop and our newly licenced ALMs, Kay & Vicky.

The new year will give us fresh opportunities and difficulties to resolve, with God's Grace. At Guarlford, we must have a Churchwarden to be the figurehead of the church in the community. At Powick, both wardens are standing down and we have one person training up. This is the year when we make our initial application for Heritage Lottery Funding for the future reordering of the church. At Callow End, we are all looking forward to resuming our worship in the church after the flooring works. At Madresfield, we need to build on some excellent outreach over Christmas to make the church a visible presence in the community. We are introducing new treasurer arrangements for Powick, to try something different because we could not find someone to undertake this role. I have taken on a small number of paid hours of an experienced parish administrator as I have realised I am not a good administrator. We have the services (voluntary) of a Marketing graduate to help with our website. We have a lot to do but we need to hold Luke 10:2 (or more likely v2-12) in our hearts and minds as we pray through the role of our churches in our communities.

We have to accept the fact that we are fragile - in one of our churches, we have lost seven people since September -either through moving away or death. Some of our church services are in low single figures and are in my opinion not sustainable now. Wedding bookings this year are single figures : not in the teens as we have been used to. More funerals are taking place at the Crem than in church and this year, the parish doesn't get any share of the fees. But we will still help those families that need us regardless of the fee situation. Wider, the Diocese is looking at cost reduction and fifteen clerical posts have been frozen. We must not be despondent. Perhaps **less can be more** on a number of levels. That is going to be my mantra for the coming year. If we pull back on certain activities, perhaps we can invest the time and energy released into more missional endeavours that continue to reach out to the communities that we are all part of and hopefully in prayer new growth can break through from the seeds being planted. **So, what's your Covenant going to be, this year?**

Rev Gary Crellin

revgarycrellin@gmail.com

www.oldhillsmalvern.co.uk