

PARISH OF REDGRAVE CUM BOTESDALE WITH THE RICKINGHALLS REPORT 2023-24

In some respects, 2023 was a sad time for our parish. Our Rector, Rev. Chris Norburn, was diagnosed with long Covid and was on sick leave for most of the year. The Rural Dean, Susan Loxton, arranged cover for the parish, and we had several visiting clergy taking services and funerals. We have several retired clergy living in our villages who were also able to help out. After considerable soul searching, Chris decided to take early retirement and we held a farewell service and lunch for him and his wife, Barbara, on November 19th. Chris came here as priest in charge in October 1999 and was made rector on August 1st 2000 and gave 23 years of service to this community for which we are grateful.

We have been able to hold services in our three buildings throughout the year thanks to our visiting clergy. We held a united service with our friends from Parkview and the Methodist chapel on Ash Wednesday and, on Good Friday, after a walk of witness from the carpark at Rickinghall, held our annual open-air service in the Market Square in Botesdale. This was well attended. We were invited to sing carols at the Cross Keys in Redgrave before Christmas which was a convivial affair and we held our Carol Service at St Mary's in Rickinghall as well as the usual Christmas Eve Midnight Eucharist and Christmas Day service.

So, what of the future? You will have read a report in the magazine from the Rural Dean, setting out what we hope to achieve. The idea is that we would unite with the North Hartismere benefice which has six parishes and seven churches. An incumbent will be appointed to oversee all of us and would live in the Rectory in Bury Road, Rickinghall. Various meetings have taken place to put in place the procedure for appointing someone to this position and we are almost ready to advertise.

Anyone visiting St Mary's in Rickinghall will not have failed to notice the large orange plastic sheeting draped over the entrance to the chancel. The north roof of the chancel has been retiled and the inside ceiling has had to be replaced. This was a major project costing in the region of £65,000 which is now nearing the end. We hope it will be finished soon and certainly in time for a wedding in June!

Huan Kenworthy