

Vicars report 2024

In some respects it seems like I have been with you in Norton forever, but when I look back in my diary I realise that I was licensed as your vicar on 11th July 2024 and so this report covers less than a year in office.

Firstly, a big thank you to all of you for the welcome that I and my family received as we moved to Letchworth and as I began my ministry at Norton. It really is a joy to be part of our churches and to be a part of the wider Letchworth community.

It was wonderful to be able to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the opening of St George's Church in the summer and it was a good way for me to meet so many of the congregation at the BBQ after the service. The weather was glorious and a good time was had by all. Thank you to all who made the celebrations possible with all of their hard work.

In my first few months I sought to get to know people and see how things worked in Norton, and to spend time in prayer seeking the way forward for our parish. It has been a challenging number of years for the western church and Christianity in general, with falling attendances at church and less people identifying as Christian. Some effects of the pandemic are still felt, and that's without any unique issues and challenges which face individual parishes. I am pleased to say that there are some small signs of growth across the church and here in Norton also and we must now look to the future and seek God's calling and wisdom as to where he is leading us over the next few years.

It has been good to engage with some of our schools, with the Grange Academy and Northfields joint Harvest service at St George's in October, our Schools Community Carol Service, Grange Academy Christingle and Norton St Nicholas Christingle Services in December. I have also visited Northfields and Norton St Nicholas.

I have taken on the role of Chaplain to TS Danae, the Letchworth and Hitchin Sea Cadet Unit and I was honoured to be licensed to this position at the Trafalgar Day service at St Albans Cathedral in the presence of HRH The Duke of Kent.

Our Advent and Christmas services were well attended and it was lovely to see so many people at our Crib Service.

Sadly I became quite poorly during Advent, although I didn't realise it at the time and I had to spend the New Year period in hospital. I was diagnosed first with pneumonia and then with multiple blood clots in both of my lungs. First and foremost I am thankful to God for prompting me to seek medical help when I did, and also to all the medical team at Lister Hospital whose intervention was swift to stabilise me and help me to begin my recovery. I am still recovering from this illness and it has understandably affected my ministry in the first half of 2025, being off of work completely during January and working restricted hours since the beginning of February.

During February I was pleased to welcome the Nursery and Reception classes from Norton St Nicholas as they came to St Nicholas Church to learn about baptism and at St Georges' we hosted a day for those engaged in Reader ministry which was attended by the Archdeacon of

St Albans and the Bishop of Hertford. Sadly I was unable to attend but thank you to those who organised the day, I hear it was a great success!

In March we hosted the Norton St Nicholas School iSing concert at St Georges'. iSing is an organisation which promotes the Christian faith in schools through stories and music and it was wonderful to hear the children in such good voice during the concert.

We heard the sad news in March of the death of Peter Wenman. I won't repeat the many glowing tributes that were given in memory of Peter, but I think that it is right that his contribution to the life of our Parish over many decades is recognised in this report.

We entered Holy Week and Easter in April, culminating with our Easter Sunday service which was such a joy. It's not all about numbers coming through the doors, but the attendance on Easter Sunday was significantly higher than last year. In fact there has been a slight growth in Sunday attendance in the first half of 2025 and we hope and pray for this to continue as 2025 progresses.

Baptisms and funerals continue to be a staple of parish ministry and it has been a privilege to meet so many of our parishioners at these services.

It hasn't been the easiest of starts to 2025 but I have been so blessed and encouraged by the care, support and love that I have been shown by all at St Nicholas and St Georges'. My personal thanks to Rev Don Dowling and Rev Anthony Giles for taking services as and when needed, to our Readers, Karen Williams, Helen Giles and Jackie Halter for their help and looking after me during services, and to our Churchwardens, Ros Pratt and Neil Greatorex, for their hard work and care for me, particularly when I need to be told to slow down!

We are very fortunate that so much happens in our churches and it is vital that this work continues as it blesses not just our congregations but also the wider community. With that in mind my heartfelt thanks goes to

Margaret Andre and Jacquie Croot and all who help run Norton Coffee Shop.

Liz Beardmore and Angie Caldwell for running the Creche and Aspire.

Vicky Cameron and all the team who organise and run Dragons

Karen Williams, Vicky Cameron and all who run our All Together Service.

Susan Taylor all of the Messy church team which is run with Norton Methodist Church

Flower de Jager, Susan Taylor and the rest of the team, working at Norton Nippers

Keith Taylor, Susan Taylor for running the Bible Study groups.

The Social Committee for all the events they organise..

Tim Croot and Keith Sparrow and the choir for our music.

Michelle Rigby, Fiona Eve and the flower team.

All of our Servers.

Flower in her role as Admin and Cleaner.

Vicky Cameron and Susan Taylor for leading the prayer meetings.

Keith Sparrow for playing the organ at the 11.15 service.

Carol Greateorex for her work as our Treasurer.

Flower de Jager and Neil Greateorex for dealing with hall bookings.

Our readers Karen Williams, Helen Giles and Jackie Halter for their ministries and support.

Rev Don Dowling and Rev Anthony Giles for their support and encouragement.

Andy Nichols as our safeguarding officer

Ros Pratt and Neil Greateorex for their tireless work as our Churchwardens

All who serve on our PCC

The Friends of St Nicholas

The St Nicholas Bellringers.

Those who steward on Sundays.

To be your Vicar is an honour and I feel so richly blessed that God has called me here to Norton at this time in my ministry and I look forward with hope and eagerness to see where God leads us during the next few years together.

When I first felt called to ordained ministry I had this Bible verse from Matthew 28 going round and round in my head. It is still the very basis of my ministry today, and I believe it is the calling of God to all of his people:

19 *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

20 *and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

God bless

Rev Eugene

