

## FROM THE VICARAGE

The following paragraph has been in our weekly church notices slip over the past few weeks:

### **YOUR CHURCH IN 20 YEARS' TIME? - SATURDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 9.30 am - 12.00 noon**

*With falling clergy numbers, rising costs, a largely ageing congregation and dwindling church income, the PCC has been thinking how St Mary's might look in 2039. We are concerned that the current pattern of worship and church activities isn't sustainable indefinitely and so we've organised an event, facilitated by the Ven. Robin King, the Archdeacon of Stansted, to decide what we might do now to ensure St Mary's, as we know and love it, has a long-term future. We'd like as many of you as possible, of all ages, to come and join us on **Saturday 12th October, 9.30-12 noon in the Church Rooms**. If you really care about the future of your church, you need to come if you possibly can. Do speak to Simon or the churchwardens to find out more.*

Of course, 'The Church' isn't a building, but a body of people - the 'people of God' gathered with the common purpose of worshipping God and expressing his love in their lives in their local community. We're almost all volunteers, and the essential tasks that keep St Mary's going are done by a relatively small group of people, most of whom are in their 60's and 70's. In 20 years' time almost all of them won't be here or won't be very active at all! We need to start thinking now, carefully and creatively, how St Mary's will not just survive but also flourish in the years to come.

The questions and issues we'll address include:

- What do you think is truly important in our church life?
- How much of what we do now is necessary or essential?
- How might our patterns of services need to change over the next 20 years?
- How best do we prepare for all this?

We have much to celebrate now, including several popular events and services like our Summer Fete, the Christmas Tree Festival, next month's 'In Loving Memory' bereavement service, the Pet Service, Remembrance Sunday and our Christmas services. Messy Church is popular too and we have a great relationship with our church school, St Mary's Primary Academy, with the children coming to church regularly throughout the year. Skip's funeral at the end of July was a reminder of the central place St Mary's has for our village. I think we would be missed if we weren't here.

The current generation of 'doers' won't last forever: we all need to wake up to this. When people come to church, they rightly expect it to be open, well-lit and heated, with someone to greet them at the door plus an organist to play, or whatever else is needed. How do we start planning now so this is all still happening in 20 years? How much of what we do now will we still be able and willing to do then? We want to ensure that when someone comes to arrange a christening or a wedding or asks about our Christmas services, they find someone to meet their need and don't find the church empty, locked and unused. We all want St Mary's to remain open and active for a lot longer than 20 years! For this to happen, then over the next few years we need people to step up so that it does. If this matters to **you**, then do come to St Mary's on **Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October at 9.30 am**.

A reminder: our '**In Loving Memory**' bereavement service is on **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> November at 4.00 pm**. This is a service for **anyone** (and we do mean anyone) how has lost someone and is grieving, however long ago you lost him or her, and whether or not the funeral was in St Mary's or was taken by me. You will be guaranteed a quiet, reflective service, an opportunity to light candles and space to grieve and remember - plus some friendly company and very nice cakes afterwards.

With every blessing,

*Simon*

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## **From the Parish Registers, September 2019**

**Baptisms**      *We send our congratulations to the parents and families of:*

15 September – Taylor David Colton, Mylee Ann Colton and Jack Andrew Colton

**Funerals**      *We offer our prayers for and condolences to the families and friends of:*

30 August – Rita Slater (Chelmsford Crematorium)

30 August – Margaret Mary Challis (Colchester Crematorium)

*The dates of both funerals above were confirmed too late to be included in last month's magazine in time. Please accept our apologies.*

11 September – Geoffrey William Sutton (Colchester Crematorium)

25 September - Geoffrey Metzger (private family funeral at Three Counties Crematorium)

*Followed by a Thanksgiving and Memorial Service for Geoff at All Saints' Feering on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September.*

*There were no weddings in St Mary's in September.*