

*The Rectory, 20 St Peter's Hill, Caversham*

17 May 2010

Dear Friends

The parish of Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham will come into existence on Tuesday 1st June 2010. This document seeks to answer as many questions as possible about this significant change in the life of our churches. If you have any other questions that are not addressed here, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

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## **ABOUT THE PARISH OF CAVERSHAM THAMESIDE & MAPLEDURHAM**

### **What will the new parish be called?**

The parish of Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham.

### **What happens to the two parishes we have now?**

The parish of St John the Baptist Caversham and the parish of St Peter Caversham & St Margaret Mapledurham will cease to exist. The two parishes will merge as equal partners in the new parish.

### **So which is the parish church?**

All three churches retain their status as Parish Churches and their names. As they are all parish churches they are all of equal status.

### **After the previous priests retired the two parishes were suspended.**

#### **What happens about that?**

The two parishes were suspended (this means that I was appointed as priest in charge rather than as incumbent) so that we could investigate whether we wanted to merge. The suspensions are automatically lifted on the day the new parish comes into being. This means that, as from 1st June, I shall retain leadership responsibility for all three churches but become Rector of the parish.

### **Will there be a special service to mark this new beginning?**

Everything changes over night, so there is no need for me to be licensed by the Bishop. However, the Patronal Festivals for all three churches fall in June and July so we shall celebrate the new parish at each of those services ... ending with a special service at St Margaret's on Sunday 25th July.

**What about the PCC?**

There will be one PCC for the new parish. A group of people have been working out how to make this work efficiently and effectively, and have come up with a plan that will keep the PCC to a manageable number, and give real autonomy to Church Leadership Teams.

**How many people will be on the PCC?**

About two dozen: all the licensed clergy (6), wardens (6), deanery synod representatives (5), lay representatives from the three churches (3 from each church).

**Won't that be too big?**

The legislation that we have to follow determines that that is the smallest number of people we can have. However we are very aware that this is a large group, which means that the work of the PCC will be carefully worked out. The PCC will not be looking into details of the churches' activities, rather it will set the direction for the parish, dream a vision of what the churches might become and monitor the work done within the churches.

**So where will the nitty-gritty decisions be taken?**

That's where the Church Leadership Team comes in. Each church will have a team appointed by a committee of the PCC in consultation with the church congregation. The role of the Church Leadership Team is to grow their church: numerically and spiritually, in outreach and mission.

**How will the 'views from the pews' be heard?**

Three times a year each church will be holding an Open Forum where everyone is welcome to meet with the Church Leadership Team and with the 3 elected PCC representatives for that church. Those meetings will be a bit like the Annual Church Meetings that each parish had before: hearing about the work of the church, checking on the finances, and asking questions about the direction the church is taking.

**Will there be an Annual Meeting?**

Yes. Every parish has, by law, to hold an Annual Parochial Church Meeting and the parish of Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham is no exception. This meeting will be open to anyone on the electoral roll of the parish. As now, the meeting will elect new lay representatives to the PCC, hear about the activities of the parish and receive the parish accounts.

**Is this just centralisation?**

No, this is not about centralisation. We're not wanting to create three churches that all look and feel the same. People choose a church to attend for many reasons and we want to enable our three churches to remain different, distinct and unique. We want to celebrate that diversity and encourage the three churches to grow in the ways that are right to them.

**What are the benefits in being one parish then?**

We hope (and we can't put it more firmly than that) that this way of being church will help, encourage and affirm all three churches to be places where more people from across Caversham and Mapledurham can belong to a loving community, can learn about the faith we share, and can grow as a disciple of Christ.

**What happens next?**

Quite soon now everyone on the electoral roll of the two parishes will get a bumper pack containing a letter from me, an electoral roll form for the new parish, a sheet seeking to gather more information about everyone in the churches, and a Stewardship Form asking us to consider how much we give to support the ministry of the Church of England through our giving within this new parish. We'll be asking you to complete these forms before the SPCM.

**What's the SPCM?**

It stands for Special Parochial Church Meeting and it's a meeting like the APCMs we had recently for the two parishes. We won't be electing wardens or representatives to Deanery Synod; but we will elect PCC members and attend to other matters just like any APCM.

**What's the date of the SPCM?**

We'll let you know as soon as we know.

**Is there more information about this?**

If you would like to see the charts and images that have been developed as a result of all the work that has gone into this change, please do ask.