

## **APCM, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022 - Message from Felicity**

I am so sorry not to be with you tonight and my thanks are due to Mark and Katy, and to Margaret who have gathered up all that needs doing for these meetings. After a few rough days I am not feeling too bad now and can walk the dog in empty fields but I am still testing positive so can't be with you.

Thank you to all of you for your presence and support all year in all the things you have done, and had I been present I would have wanted to affirm again my thanks to clergy and lay colleagues who have been truly wonderful all year - flexible and problem solving as different things have been thrown at us - even this week covering for me at short notice! You will have seen from the Annual Report how much we were able to do despite the obvious restrictions.

In the coming months we will be looking at strengthening the role of small groups as places where we can pray, read the Bible, learn, eat, laugh, do things, trust, and belong. I hope that many people who are not currently in a small group (from the active Making Group, to the contemplative Meditation Group with much in between) might consider joining one. We will be raising the profile of the different groups, looking to support our existing groups better, and to train leaders for new groups.

We will also be strengthening our community links and actively addressing how we can serve the needs of the new housing to be built in our parish south of the train station. This is a substantial area of building and is generating discussion at deanery level and involving our neighbouring parishes too. With good will and intelligent negotiation we could hope for some interesting possibilities for ministry and cross parish collaboration. The new PCC will be involved in this important decision making.

And of course we will continue our commitment to welcoming and supporting guests from Ukraine, wherever that takes us.

Today we pray especially for the civilians, adults and children, still in the tunnels in the Mariupol steel works as Russian troops now storm the complex.

I am sad to report that we are still waiting for all the families who are supposed to be joining us. Nothing has moved since Easter; two of our families have had to reapply for visas and start the process from the beginning again; others are simply waiting as visas trickle in for some family members but not all of them. I have also helped match guests to other local hosts and I have been supporting these people in the application process and general practical things. So we are also in contact with hosts in Bunkers Hill, Shipton, Charlton on Otmoor, Lower Heyford, and Kidlington. All of these hosts are also waiting....

Until we know how many guests actually arrive it is hard for the county council to make firm plans about the idea of using Glebe House as a Hub. I have been talking with Cllr Calum Miller who represents Islip on the county council (and

Nigel Simpson and Ian Middleton too). We need to know that enough people will want to use it. However the county council has asked that a simple kitchen be reinstalled as that will be absolutely necessary, so some things are happening behind those hoardings. Gosford Medical Centre is ready and willing to register new patients without fuss or delay, and even to run a clinic from Glebe House if necessary. Vodafone is sending 60 free SIM cards for phones! There is lots of goodwill....

Meanwhile groups are forming to support guests when they do arrive. I have contact with groups in Islip, Wooton, Yarnton, and north Oxford. They are keen to work with us so that we can pool resources, offer friendship and social events, and enable supportive networks to flourish. There is also an enthusiastic band of local people on the app, 'Nextdoor' with whom I try to communicate when I can.

I think I have done as much as I can as an individual now, and it is time to gather up the goodwill and form a support group from the local churches and also beyond the churches including local people of goodwill. There are several people offering to be on such a group from 'Nextdoor' already. This group could :

- hold the offers of help that I have received and call them in as needed
- make a plan to welcome each new family as they arrive
- address the needs of each individual family (some will need medical help, others sports equipment, others language / transport etc)
- steer the vision for Glebe House as a Support Hub with advice, language, counselling, socials, childcare, friendship.... (not for living in)
- keep contact with the other village support groups and churches and work together. (e.g. St Michael's Summertown is running a Wednesday afternoon drop in cafe for Ukrainian guests)

If anyone is interested in being part of such a Kidlington Welcome Steering Group do please leave your name tonight and we will set up a first meeting in the next few weeks of everyone interested from the churches and beyond. (Please note you can still offer your skills to help our guests without being on the welcome steering group.)

Once again I thank you all and I look forward to being back with you once I test negative! Meanwhile please continue to pray for each other, as I pray for you.

Grace, mercy and peace be with you all  
Felicity