

Last month I wrote about ‘Caring at Christmas ... and beyond’, and the care that we can give one another as community. Well, now is the ‘beyond’ and January is traditionally seen as a time of new starts and, of course, the dreaded New Year’s resolutions. Personally, I do not sign up to the need to have a resolution. They are far too easy to break and then feel despondent or guilty about. So, no New Year’s resolution for me, but the start of a new year is a good time to think about something new you might like to do or try.

So, here is a thought: could the new thing you want to do or try be connected to the community; to helping people; to caring about someone other than your immediate family? Could it be getting involved with youngsters? Or, if they are not your thing, getting involved with oldsters? Or, if they are not your thing, there are plenty of people in the middle who would value company.

In September we launched ‘Blend’ in Sandhurst, the after-school group for children aged 11-14 in school years seven, eight and nine. We regularly get 15-18 youngsters turning up for a couple of hours on a Tuesday from 4pm at the Mission Church. They play table tennis, air-hockey, pool, table football, games on Xbox, and have refreshments, a chat and a laugh together. It is great fun. I still have a heart for this to happen in Benenden as well; I know there is a need. I have an offer of a helper and I have an offer of funding, but I need someone with a heart to make it happen. Could that be you?

This month in Benenden sees the launch of the ‘Hello. How are you? Club’, a drop-in café/social place, in the Memorial Hall (see Tracy’s article in this month’s parish magazine, page 9). Initially it is being held every three weeks and we’ll see how the need develops. It’s simply a safe warm place to gather for a couple of hours, with company if you wish, or on your own if you prefer, and have a coffee/tea/cake (free or make a donation). Sit and read a book; have a chat; whatever you want and in the company of others. I have a heart to do a Drop-in Café in the Mission Church in Sandhurst, maybe weekly (similar to the Toddler Group, but you don’t need a toddler!). Just a time and space together with others. I need someone with a heart to make it happen. Could that be you?

On Saturday 30th November our new Bishop of Dover, the Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin (formerly chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons) was installed at a lovely service at Canterbury Cathedral. In her sermon she encouraged a community spirit and a heart to say “yes”. Yes to thinking about others; yes to helping others; yes to building our community. At the start of this new year, look to do something new; and when the opportunity presents itself, just say “yes”.

Revd David Commander, Rector