

### **Restore - Renew - Rejoice: The New Year is here**

I trust that Christmas was peaceful for you. If it was a first Christmas for you without a loved one, I hope that other family members and friends surrounded you and supported you with their love.

In the centre of this month's Benenden magazine is a piece about the church project: Restore - Renew - Rejoice. Please take time to look at it and read it, and get involved in the project in some way. It is your parish church. It has been here for centuries; we are trying to ensure it is suitable for worship and community events in the 21st century - just as all our forebears have done down through its life.

You will read that the building work starts on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2026. Phase One of the project is an underfloor heating system (plus back-up radiators) and a new level floor throughout the whole nave - the main part of the church. For the duration of this work (through to the end of November 2026) St George's Church building will be closed. The building might be closed, but worship and services will continue.

The 8am services will continue every Sunday and will take place in the chancel of St George's Church - the part of the church where the choir usually sit. Access to this will be via the Bishop's Door (that's the single pedestrian door on the front left-hand side of the building as you look at it from The Green). A monthly evening prayer service will also take place in the chancel: 5pm on the first Sunday of the month.

The 10am services will take place in the hall of Benenden Primary School. It will be different, of course, but it is still in Benenden - and only a few hundred metres from where we usually worship. And the temporary change of venue will provide some new opportunities for us as we gather every Sunday to worship together in a new space. The bells will still ring out on a Sunday morning, calling people to worship. I can assure you they can be clearly heard from the primary school!

The 'special' services (e.g. Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Pentecost) will still take place, of course, but will also have a temporary change of venue. We will celebrate these important events in the church year in the Mission Church or at St Nicholas Church in Sandhurst. More details as we get closer to those events. And the village fete in support of St George's Church will still go ahead (Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2026 - get the date in your diary).

The centre spread contains more information about the project and how you can get involved or donate. Please join in. It's going to be an exciting new year in the life of St George's Church.

***Revd David Commander, Rector and Area Dean***