

# St Mary-le-Moor Church Vision

We, the congregation and vicar of St Mary-le-Moor Church in Cadmore End believe that our church (the place, church community and various forms of worship) have value and meaning in this present day in the following ways:

- To provide a place and times for peace and reflection, which are much needed in this busy world
- To show some kind of light to those searching for meaning in their lives.
- To be a small centre of love and compassion, for our community and for the whole world
- To recall through the language and music of our church traditions the history and continuity of faith in our country and to instill it with fresh meaning
- To celebrate, question and consider the pattern of life and nature, and the joys and sorrows of our individual lives, in the light of eternal truth and love.
- To worship eternal truth and love

For us God is eternal truth and love, as revealed through Jesus and as found in our souls. However we welcome people of all faiths (and none) to our church to enjoy it and to find peace and renewal in whatsoever way they can. There is no entry fee and no entry belief, nor are there any exit requirements. There is no obligation to do or say anything, except to respect the place and each other. All are welcome.

## **Our Church**

St Mary-le-Moor is a small church with a small congregation. We are part of the Church of England and follow the traditions of this church, using for a large part the language, hymns and rituals of the church as adopted and developed locally. However we also aim to offer, through our services and through the buildings and churchyard, a place and a pattern of worship which will enable people from all backgrounds and of all beliefs (or none) to reflect and be renewed. We hope that people will be able to understand the language of our services without confusion or misunderstanding and we are making efforts to ensure that this is so.

The Church is open in the daylight hours whenever it can be, and there is a place at the back of the church where people may sit, light a candle and reflect or pray. There are short booklets to read, if required. The churchyard is also a place where people may sit and reflect, as well as visit their loved ones.

### **Our monthly pattern of worship**

We have a regular pattern of worship as follows:

1. Traditional Sung Holy Communion on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month at 11.00am
2. Quiet Service with Holy Communion on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday (when it occurs) of each month at 11.00am
3. Evensong on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month at 6.00pm

These services provide a variety of ways of worshipping: The Traditional Sung Holy Communion follows the well known pattern of liturgy: 3 hymns, a psalm, and a sermon along with the celebration of the Eucharist. The Quiet Service is held in the choir stalls and is both intimate and meditative. The service is full of silence, with a shortened liturgy, a short ex-tempore sermon and a Taize chant at the end. Evensong follows the Book of Common Prayer and is usually said rather than sung.

### **Our yearly pattern of worship**

In addition to the regular services we have the annual pattern of worship which is important in marking the Christian Calendar and the seasons, and which also explore deeper themes of life and Christian belief. These are

- Advent – we hold a Carol Service at the start of Advent to mark this time of waiting and self examination prior to the joy of Christmas. The service is candle lit and is a time for reflection.
- Christmas – we hold a Carol Service on the Sunday before Christmas with plenty of traditional carols and readings. There is also Carol Singing around the village for 3 nights prior to Christmas Day, with much jollity and good attendance. On Christmas Eve there is a

midnight mass at 11.30pm, and on Christmas Day there is Christmas Holy Communion at 11.00am

- Lent – we hold Compline (night prayer) at 8.00pm on each Wednesday followed by a meditative reading and sometimes a discussion. During Lent we do not say Alleluia or the Gloria. It is a time of abstinence which it is important to mark.

- Easter – Easter is the most important part of the Christian Calendar and is when we contemplate dying, resurrection, our own rebirth and renewal and the problems of suffering and evil, as well as the joys of spring and the transforming love of God. The Easter ceremonies start on Palm Sunday before Easter at 11.00am with a procession outside the church and then the reading of the Passion (the Gospel account of the Last Supper and Crucifixion) in parts in the Church.

During the days of Holy Week there are services every day in the Group to remember this special time. At Cadmore End we hold a Holy Communion on Holy Wednesday at 8.00pm followed by meditations on the 14 Stations of the Cross, which are the pictures hung around the nave of the Church.

On Good Friday we hold a service at 11.00am with a full reading of St John's account of the Crucifixion. We worship the Cross and the service ends without a blessing or dismissal.

On Easter Saturday we celebrate Compline (night prayer) at 8.00pm and then the church remains open for vigil until dawn. At 4.00am the Easter ceremonies begin in darkness with readings from the Old Testament, which foreshadow the glory of Easter. We then proceed out to the churchyard where a bonfire (the Easter fire) is lit. From this the Easter candle is lighted and ancient prayers are said. We process with the candle back into the church where everyone lights a candle from this Easter candle and the Exultet, an ancient chant, is sung. The church is lit up with the beautiful soft light of Easter candles and the hopeful presence of the worshippers. Then we say the Gloria and the Easter Holy Communion begins. We all make our baptism promises again and are all sprinkled with holy water as we are re-born to new life. Then we celebrate Communion, sing a hymn and go out into the newly broken dawn.

Later that morning at 11.00am a second Easter Eucharist is held for those unable to make the dawn service.

- Rogation Sunday – this is when we bless the fields and land in May at Evensong. We process from the Church to the fields and spend time looking over the magnificent hills and valleys of our village.

- Pentecost – We do not have a major celebration of Pentecost. In a low key way we do however remember the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and Disciples after the Ascension of Jesus.
- Patronal Festival – this is celebrated on the Sunday prior to the 11<sup>th</sup> of September which is the birth of Mary the Mother of Jesus. Although it is not certain that our church is dedicated to Mary the Mother of Jesus (it may be that Mary-le-Moor refers to Mary of Egypt), we celebrate our Church's patron on this day and reflect on all those who built and have worshipped in our small church, and upon our unspoken bond with this place and community as well as with the communion of saints. This is done particularly at Evensong, with a guest preacher. The service is followed by drinks and snacks in the Village Hall.
- Harvest Festival – This is celebrated on the first Sunday in October, at evensong, again with a guest preacher. We celebrate our place in creation and the gifts and glory of Nature. We then have a sit-down harvest supper in the Village Hall, and sometimes we even have some formal entertainment as well!
- Remembrance Day – this is held at 10.55am on the second Sunday in November and is a time not only to honour the dead who have died fighting for this country (and particularly those from this Parish in the two world wars), but to reflect on war and conflict and to pray for peace and reconciliation throughout the world. There are drinks and snacks after the service in the Village Hall.

### **Occasional services**

The following occasional services take place in our church

- Baptisms
- Marriages and blessings
- Funerals
- School services

Baptisms take place during our Sunday morning service and are a good opportunity to welcome people to the church. We are trying to make the baptism service more understandable and less weird to non-church people.

### **Other things we do**

The church is also involved in the social life of the village, and the village also helps out with some practical matters to help the church.

In addition to the services the church runs a Christmas Bazaar and helps with a summer fete. Until recently this has been the Village Revels on the second Saturday in July. However this year we initiated a village festival on the weekend of our patronal festival. This festival involved the village and the cricket club as well as the church. Funds raised were split between the church and cricket club. Attendance at the event was low but the atmosphere was very good.

The church has linked up with Community Matters, which is a Churches Together initiative in Lane End and has started providing food and financial donations to this initiative.

The church has also been raising money for Jan Chetna Manch Bokaro, a Womens Health Project in Jharkhand state in India. Over £5000 has been raised in the past 3 years which has helped pay for a new health care centre. The centre is run by Lindsay Barnes, a friend of one of congregation. Lindsay has visited Cadmore End several times and in 2013 she gave a talk on her work in the village hall.

On the other hand members of the village assist in maintenance parties, cleaning the church gutters, cutting hedges and mowing the churchyard. This is extremely helpful and engages people who may not be involved with the church in any other way. Fundraising events are also held regularly in the village hall and some of these funds are given the church. Generally the relationship with the village is extremely good and beneficial to all parties.

### **Our current situation and the challenges we face**

Our church is well loved in the village and surrounding area, and attendance at festivals and at Christmas and Easter is still good. However there has been a steady and significant decline in both regular and festival attendance for the last few decades. The ending of the family service in 2012 after 21 years meant a considerable reduction in numbers, particularly of children and young people (though this had been declining also for several years). The ending of sung evensong at around the same time and the reduction of said evensong two years later from the first, third and fifth Sundays of the month, to the first Sunday only, also are both a sign and a cause of lower attendance. The disengagement of church from village school has been a

problem for many years, as almost no children at the school are from the village.

There are many causes for this decline which is common in many rural parishes across the UK in many types of congregation. Not only the church but many village institutions are struggling. The cricket club has been in decline for many years and the pub has been “temporarily” closed for 3 years now. In many ways we are fortunate to still have such good support from the village and surrounding area, and the church still performs an important role in the life of the village. However the lack of attendance puts a continual strain on finances, maintenance and the pattern of worship. The church roof is now in need of replacement after 160 years, and the cost of this will be difficult for the church to bear, considering we cannot even pay our parish share of £13,000 each year. Some kind of renewal is necessary. While the social side of the church is essential and could and should be developed along with new uses for the building and churchyard, in itself this will not be enough. Our church’s renewal must come also from our belief, from our faith in God, as known in and through Christ, and not just from a temporary financial necessity or vague desire for continuity. Otherwise we will be left with an empty, expensive shell and a sham religion.