

Sunday is your busy day isn't it?

There cannot be a vicar in the land who hasn't had someone say to them, "Of course, you only have to work on Sunday's don't you?". And I am sure most of us meet that comment with a wry smile and something along the lines of "I've never heard anyone say that to me before...." But what do vicars and rectors actually do during those mysterious days of the week when some people may imagine us held in limbo somewhere waiting for the week to come around to Sunday once more? The best way I can answer the question I have posed is to tell you a little about my job and what I do.

I am Rector of the Church in the Woottons which means I have pastoral responsibility for the single ecclesiastical (church) parish which embraces the two village of North and South Wootton. In the ancient language of the church, as Rector I have the "cure of souls" which means I have a duty of care for the spiritual wellbeing of everyone who lives within the boundary of the parish. Now before you panic, that doesn't mean that I am going to knock on the door of every household demanding to know when you last prayed, or even when you last made your confession! However, it does mean that if anyone in the parish seeks spiritual advice from me I, or one of my fellow clergy have a duty to offer it to them. It also means that you have the right to ask me or one of my colleagues to marry you in one of our churches (unless the law of the land forbids your marriage), to Christen (baptise) your child, or to conduct a funeral for someone who resides in, or has resided in the parish.

I, together with the Churchwardens, am obliged to ensure that at least one act of Christian worship, authorised by the Church of England takes place within the parish each and every Sunday. I share leadership of The Church in the Woottons with three clergy colleagues, four churchwardens, fifteen members of the Parochial Church Council and a Parish Administrator. So you can see I don't carry the weight of running the parish alone. I also have the support of many other colleagues in the Diocese Norwich including the bishops and archdeacons. This Diocese covers most of Norfolk and a small part of Suffolk.

Some of my time each day is spent in preparation. Leading Sunday worship needs a significant amount of time spent praying, reading and writing - as do weddings, funeral and baptisms. I have to deal with an increasing load of paperwork and respond to lots and lots of emails and telephone calls just like anyone else with an office to run. I and my colleagues visit schools and care homes, we put on mid-week activities and visit people at home. One of my greatest joys is in helping people rediscover their faith, or to discover their faith in Jesus Christ for the very first time, and then to see real change in their lives.

As well as being Rector of the parish I am also Rural Dean of Lynn which means I work with the bishop and archdeacon in supporting my fellow clergy in King's Lynn and the surrounding villages. I also work closely with Captain James Hawksworth who is working to establish a Church Army Centre of Mission in King's Lynn. We are very fortunate in King's Lynn in having something called the "Imagination Project-King's Lynn". This project is funded partly by the Diocese of Norwich and partly by the Church Urban Fund and through the work of local key worker Andrew Frere-Smith it seeks to encourage local churches to engage with social issues and problems. The new King's Lynn night shelter is just one result of Andrew's work. He works closely with the King's Lynn Debt Centre, the Foodbank and other organisations and initiatives. One of my responsibilities is to work closely with Andrew, supporting him and encouraging him in his work. My supervisory work however is mostly focused on training, supporting and encouraging our Curate, the Revd. Dan Tansey during the four years that he will be working with us in the Woottons.

I hope you can see by now that there is plenty for me to do during a typical week. I do have time for other things though – my family, photography, model making and gardening. The demands of my job are many but I must say I thoroughly enjoy the privilege, the challenges, and the variety of the work I do.

James