

## ROGER

*As our Rector leaves this Parish to start a new ministry, Trevor Bench-Capon writes an appreciation*



When Roger came to us as Rector of West Kirby in June 1999, we were a faithful and regular congregation who had kept things running during the interregnum pretty much as they had been before. Most people were fairly content and wondered what the new Rector would bring. Looking back there have been many changes over the eleven years. The pattern of Sunday worship is very different, with a unified service on Sundays replacing the separate Communion and Matins services; there is a regular pattern of daily public prayer, and more communion services on particular feast days. These are very positive developments, bringing us together and underlining the importance of public worship and shared communion. There are also more opportunities for fellowship and learning during the week through House Groups and short courses.

Quite apart from these organisational changes, Roger has brought a change of attitude. He has, through his preaching, his Sunday evening sermon courses, his short courses and his encouragement of House Groups, led us to explore and reflect on our faith to a greater degree, and to think about the distinctive aspects of Anglicanism. Roger has also brought us to a greater awareness of diversity of worship, through using different versions of the liturgy in different seasons and varying the layout of the Church, and with very special services on days such as Candlemas and Corpus Christi. All of this helps us think more about why we do things as we do, and their significance. Most important of all was the focus on the Great Days of Easter, which gave a real feeling of participation in the events of Holy Week, and giving reality to the centrality of Easter to our faith. For me, and I am sure for others, the *Maundy Thursday service and the Easter Vigil, with its singing of the Exsultet*, became an essential, and much looked forward to, part of preparation for Easter Sunday.

Looking outwards Roger has always seen St Bridget's with a part to play in the West Kirby community. His favourite metaphor, that we should be a pond with indeterminate edges rather than a pool with clear boundaries, has been helpful in encouraging us to welcome people and

to open ourselves to outsiders. Also we have good developed links with other denominations, perhaps the Methodists most of all, but also with useful contacts with the URC and St Agnes. The desired relation between us and the wider community will have its physical manifestation in the new Community Centre.

Roger has played an important part in the our lives as a pastor providing support at times happy and sad. For me in recent months he has been a welcome hospital visitor and an important part of my son's marriage blessing.

So Roger leaves us a more thoughtful, more worshipful and more open congregation. We will be sorry to see him go, but throughout his Ministry to us he has stressed that the journey towards God is not one that is ever finished: a favourite quotation from RS Thomas has been *He is such a fast God, always before us and leaving as we arrive*. Exploration brings with it awareness of how much remains to be explored and It is always necessary to move on. As we go our separate ways, we trust that we will all come closer to God.

*Trevor Bench-Capon, September 2011*

