

The Garth Ministry Area News

Issue 4 : April 2022

Shiny new team...!

It was really good to be able to announce the appointment of our two new colleagues last Sunday. The last year has been a time of significant upheaval for our churches with the difficult transition to becoming a Ministry Area happening during a period when all 8 of our churches have also had to come to terms with their vicar moving on! In recognition of the challenges we've faced, the diocese has pulled out all the stops to enable us to recruit two high-quality staff with unprecedented swiftness and we are grateful for that and grateful to Sandra and Ian for their readiness to come and join our Ministry Team.

In case you missed the announcement in church it was as follows:

We are delighted to announce the appointments of two new Vicars for the Garth Ministry Area team.

Rev'd Sandra Birdsall, a former clinical cytogeneticist, will be joining us from Briton Ferry and will have pastoral responsibility for St Fagans, Taffs Well & Tongwynlais.

Rev'd Ian Yemm, a former university chaplain and singer with the WNO, will be joining us from the Cowbridge MA and will have pastoral responsibility for Danescourt and Radyr.

Both will already be known to some within the Ministry Area, Ian having been on placement in Taffs & Ton during his training and Sandra having grown up in Radyr and served as Church Warden at Christchurch.

We are still waiting for the details of timing to be finalised but we are hopeful that both our new colleagues will be with us by the end of June. We are liaising with the Bishop's office to arrange a suitable date for a licensing service which will hopefully be a single service for the whole MA to join together and welcome them both.

I've asked Sandra and Ian to write a short piece to introduce themselves to you. Sandra can go first...

I was born in Bridgend but grew up in Penarth and then Radyr from the age of nine, attending Radyr Comprehensive School. I then read Genetics at University College London where I met my husband, Mike.

After university I trained as a clinical cytogeneticist at St Bartholomew's Hospital specialising in the diagnosis and monitoring of leukaemia and lymphoma. I then spent several years as a research scientist at the Royal Marsden Hospital during which time I got married and had two daughters, Rhiannon and Lara.

We then moved back to Radyr and I began working at the University Hospital of Wales where I progressed through the 'ranks' becoming head of the Haematological Malignancy Genetic Diagnosis Laboratory. I also was invited to become a steering group member and assessor for the UK and European quality assessment scheme for clinical cytogenetics.

Outside of work I became a Sunday school teacher and later Church Warden in the Parish of Radyr. Finding this ministry and my faith becoming a more and more important part of my life, I left work in 2013 to study full time at St Mike's. I was ordained Deacon in 2015 and priest in 2016, serving my title in the Parish of Penarth All Saints.

In January 2019 I was commissioned as Diocesan Mothers' Union Chaplain. A role I love and have recently been recommissioned for the new triennium. In June 2019 I was appointed Vicar in the Parish of Llansawel, Briton Ferry, where it has been a privilege to serve with a really friendly fun group of people. I have just this last week received official notification that I have been awarded a Master of Arts in Christian Spirituality from the University of Winchester, for which I studied at Sarum College in Salisbury. I am very much looking forward to returning closer to my roots when I move to the Garth Ministry Area, particularly serving the communities of St Fagans, Tongwynlais and Taffs Well.

My husband of 32 years, Mike is a software developer for a company in Halifax writing patient management systems for artificial limb and appliance services so working at home during lockdown meant no change for him. Rhiannon is a primary school teacher living in Pontypridd who is married to James and they have a 8 month old daughter, Mali, who is just gorgeous and an extremely well behaved little girl. Lara, after reading The Study of Religion at the School of Oriental and African Studies, in The University of London now works for the environmental department at Hugh James Solicitors in the centre of Cardiff and will be moving into the vicarage with us.

Outside of church I love travel, especially to places of ancient historical importance (so I haven't done much of that lately). I love fine food, reading, knitting for my granddaughter and my favourite animals are rhinos - even having them on my green stole!

And Ian...

Happy Easter everyone! I am really looking forward to getting to know you all in the coming months. My name is Ian Yemm. I grew up in Herefordshire and Shropshire where most of my family still live. I am married to Bernhard, who is originally from Austria, and has worked as a doctor in the NHS for the last twenty years.

Garth MA is not completely unknown to me as I did my placement in Tongwynlais and Taff's Well back in 2018. I trained for ministry in the Church in Wales at the St Padarn's Institute in Llandaff and served my Curacy in the Cowbridge Ministry Area.

My formation for the priesthood really began many decades ago and was shaped by the discipline and rhythm of living with others in community, by prayer and study, and in the practice of pastoral care and spiritual direction.

More recently though, I was the Coordinating Chaplain at the University of the West of England in Bristol and ministered in parishes in both the Bristol and Gloucester Dioceses. Prior to that, I was a professional musician, singing in the chorus of Welsh National Opera.

New beginnings can be both exciting and daunting. They are always an opportunity to discover afresh the work of God in our lives. That we will do together!

*Pray for me, as I pray for you.
Ian*

Please do pray for both families as they say their goodbyes in the parishes they have served and prepare for the upheaval of moving. Pray also for Vicki's family as they adjust to their new situation and pray for all our current Ministry Team as we will be pretty stretched for the next month or so. But news of the appointments and our initial encounters with Ian and Sandra make us very hopeful about our future work together.

The summer will be very much a fresh start for us all. We can draw a line in the sand, after the challenges we have struggled with over the last year, and start to look forward to seeing what we can achieve as a Ministry Area in the years ahead. With a fresh team, strengthened with new skills and insight, we can work together to care for the communities we are called to serve and invite more people to travel with us on the journey of faith. Exciting times!

Contact Details

Until our new colleagues are in place please contact either Rev'd Steve Willson (stevewillson@cinw.org.uk) or Rev'd Belinda Huxtable (curateofradyr@gmail.com) for matters relating to any of our churches.

Steve is away from 29/4 - 7/5 and is still on a temporary number, 2089 1490, although this *should* change to 2140 3854 this week. Belinda is on 07734 248869