

Journey of Crook Peak Parish.

A brief introduction to Crook Peak Parish and our context

Gary Orriss

We have been a united parish for nearly forty years, with one PCC. We encompass six ancient, listed church buildings. We serve eight small rural communities and a number of scattered farms and houses. We have an average Sunday attendance of about 20 at our main service. Services rotate around the churches on a bimonthly rota.

For the past 20 years or so we have had a Rector on a half stipend. In early July 2021 our rector retired, and we entered vacancy. At our pre-section 11 meeting on October 6th, 2021, we were told the post of rector would not be filled in the foreseeable future. We were asked to consider how we were going to continue as a parish.

The response to this, from our PCC and congregation, was one of bereavement. Expressing feelings of shock, anger, loss, abandonment, sadness and even rebellion.

Eventually after much prayer and thought we identified ourselves as a ‘Lay Led Parish’, with our Area Dean being ultimately responsible. The name reflects the reality of our situation, and it is a concept that folk outside the church community, have begun to understand. Being ‘Lay Led’ rather than ‘in vacancy’ gives us a positive platform to reach out from.

We have had to reduce the number of eucharists to three a month covered by priests with PTO (as are our weddings and baptisms). On the ‘flip side’ we are developing an Agape liturgy which is proving surprisingly to be a tool for inclusivity and gentle evangelism. This liturgy is centred around the idea that we are all a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9).

We share the running of the parish, amongst an amazing group of people. We are developing teams to do the things that are needed. We are modelling, I believe, the diocesan vision of shared ministry.

We are gaining confidence in who we are and give praise for the way the Spirit of God is moving amongst us. We paid our parish share last year, somewhat miraculously, as there was a drop in giving. We are starting to see a few new faces in church. We are having positive conversations around our communities. We have begun reconnecting with our school.

There is no secret formula to this. It is undergirded with prayer, lots of prayer, then more prayer.

All is not perfect. However, our experience is, if we are patient and allow Him space, ‘God is in charge’.