

# Archdeacon Missioner 20th Dec 2009

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## **Archdeacon Missioner: Change in the Diocese of Coventry**

The Bishop of Coventry, the Right Reverend Doctor Christopher Cocksworth, has appointed the Reverend Morris Rodham, Vicar of St Mary's, Leamington Spa, to the post of Archdeacon Missioner in the Diocese of Coventry, which is the Church of England in Warwickshire and the City of Coventry.



Mr Rodham succeeds the Venerable Michael Paget-Wilkes who served as Archdeacon of Warwick for eighteen years until his retirement in July 2009, but Mr Rodham's appointment marks a radical change in the scope and purpose of the post.

As Archdeacon Missioner Morris Rodham is tasked by the Bishop with implementing change throughout the Diocese, seeking to reshape local Deaneries (groups of neighbouring parishes) so that churches can be more effective in serving their communities and confidently model the relevance of the Christian faith for the twenty-first century.

He will review the roles of the Rural or Area Deans (the senior parish clergy in a Deanery) and introduce changes in order to equip them better to release the missionary energy of Parish Churches and other Christian communities.

Mr Rodham will delegate all the traditional legal and administrative tasks of an archdeacon to the Venerable Ian Watson, Archdeacon of Coventry, whose remit for such duties will include the whole Diocese.

Morris Rodham, 50, is currently vicar of St Mary's, Leamington (Diocese of Coventry), and also oversees the Church of England parishes of Warwick and Leamington as Rural Dean.

Before ordination he served in the Army and then became a teacher. He was ordained priest in 1994 and served as Curate at St Mark's Church, Leamington Spa, becoming Vicar of St Mary's in 1997.

His achievements include running 'ALPHA' courses in Leamington for the last fourteen years, seeing hundreds of people explore and discover the Christian faith, and being one of Leamington's Citizens of the Year for his swift reaction to the floods in the town in 1998.

Under Morris Rodham's leadership, St Mary's has initiated a number of projects to improve the quality of life for those at most disadvantage, including the £1.2 million multi-cultural SYNDI centre, the PATHWAY drug/alcohol/offender recovery project, debt advice, housing the homeless, and work with young people affected by instabilities in their lives and family relationships.

Membership of St Mary's is growing across all age ranges, but particularly in the under 30 age range.

Since becoming Rural Dean of Warwick and Leamington in 2006, Mr Rodham has enabled the parish churches in Warwick and Leamington to work together much more effectively in mission.

Developments in the Warwick and Leamington Deanery have been a catalyst for further thinking on strategic leadership of Deaneries in the Diocese, and Morris Rodham has chaired the 'Liberating Leadership' strategy group looking into the possibilities of more devolved and local leadership for Rural Deans.

A keen hockey player, he became the first white Captain of local Asian hockey club Khalsa in Leamington, with whom he has played competitively for 25 years, appearing in three national veterans finals.

Latterly he has given up hockey for dancing, and now teaches modern-jive dancing and puts on Charity Dancing events (raising money for St Mary's Church and Glen Coe Mountain Rescue Team) which attract experienced dancers from all across the country.

He has climbed all 284 of Scotland's Munro mountains (those over 3,000 feet), in every weather condition imaginable,



and is a qualified Mountain Leader.

He enjoys climbing in snow and ice, and loves to spend nights in the wild in snow holes he has dug!

He also enjoys music and has played drums and keyboard for over 30 years, both in and out of church.

Morris has been married to Judith, a nursery teacher, for 27 years, and they have four grown up children, all married, and one grandchild with another on the way.

Morris Rodham says, "I am really sad to be leaving St Mary's and Leamington as I love the work, the people and the local community. But I and others have begun to sense that God may be calling me to use my

experience and gifts in serving a wider church context. Having been appointed Archdeacon Missioner I will approach this new ministry with enthusiasm and energy, and I especially look forward to working with, encouraging and supporting leaders and churches across the Diocese in fulfilling their mission."

The Bishop of Coventry, the Right Reverend Doctor Christopher Cocksworth, says, "Morris Rodham is a person of talent and drive with a passionate commitment to transforming individual lives and whole communities with the love of Christ. His appointment marks the start of an exciting journey for the Diocese of Coventry as he uses his experience from Leamington and Warwick to re-shape the way we work and live as worshipping communities in today's world."

Morris Rodham is expected to take up his appointment in May 2010.

**ENDS**

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