



United Parish of Chinnor, Aston Rowant, Crowell and Sydenham

PASTORAL LETTER September 2025

by Rev'd. Brian Griffiths

Greetings dear reader,

So, here you are reading this month's @home magazine. Tricia in the church office tells me this Magazine is sent out by email to 300 people. So, who are these 300 people? They are friends of the United Parish or ex-parishioners who have moved away or the house-bound or those away at College or University. This 300 is significant – it is effectively another congregation, but one at a distance. You could call them a 'hidden congregation' when compared to our electoral role number of 124. It shows the extent of the reach of the church into the community and how the ministry of the church is appreciated.

In addition to these email copies, 100 hard copies of the Parish Magazine are printed in booklet form and these are mostly for the four sets of congregations in the United Parish. Many congregation members take them home for information, as an aide-memoir or for prayer. The office printing machine is really a sophisticated computer which, can print in a large variety of sizes, formats and styles. It takes minutes to print the 50 pages of each magazine.

Recently, a visit to Hereford Cathedral helped me to put these Parish Magazine numbers in an historical context. I had a tour of the Cathedral Chained Book Library, see the LHS photo on the next page.

In a chained library, the books are attached to their bookcase by a chain, which is sufficiently long enough to allow the books to be taken from their shelves and read but not removed from the library itself.

Recording and disseminating information is quick and easy today, but in medieval times, this process, was slow and laborious. Manuscripts were written by hand. This process of copying and disseminating books was essential to the preservation of knowledge.

The Hereford Chained Book Library is the largest in the UK. The oldest book in the collection is the Hereford Gospel, dated 780. The RHS photo shows the illuminated front-piece of the gospel.

Our expert guide told us that each hand-written manuscript takes months to produce and costs the equivalent of a village farm, being made up of the cost of the skins plus the cost of the scribe/monk.

In contrast our parish magazines costs a small amount to 'make', and it is done in seconds. However, the end result is the same – it is the dissemination of knowledge, so easy today but so hard in those days. Aren't we lucky that our parish information and the knowledge it contains can be disseminated so easily and that we live in a country where all can read and write, not just monks?

