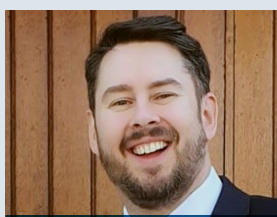




## Postponements and praise



### *Rev Andrew Gill*

#### **St Andrew's, Blackrock and Bray**

**T**here are many reasons why this Easter time was special for me as the minister of St Andrew's, Blackrock and Bray. Firstly, this year was the first year that I was able to celebrate Easter with the congregations in-person rather than online, since I was called as minister in 2019. It was a wonderful day and great to be able to gather together to worship our risen Saviour, with almost all of the restrictions on church life finally gone. Secondly, the Sunday after Easter we had a joint service with both congregations, at which our daughter was baptised. After the service we enjoyed tea and coffee in the hall, a simple part of church life which was absent for over two years.

Both of these moments made me reflect on God's faithfulness, and the hope of new life that he gives us through his glorious promises. Like all churches, the last two years have given us many challenges. The return to 'normal' has been slow, and admittedly frustrating at times.

During the first lockdown we ran a successful Alpha course online, and ever since I have been looking forward to running one in-person. Towards the end of 2021 the number of Covid cases were lowering, and I announced at our carol service that Alpha would be starting in January. But then the numbers went higher again, so it was postponed to February. But when February came, we felt the numbers were still too high, so it was postponed again to March. Then the day finally arrived. The guests had signed up, the food was cooked, everything was ready, but then I took a positive Covid test, and it was delayed for another two weeks! An example of what ministry is like during Covid times – almost but never quite...

But praise God that since then we were able to start Alpha, and every week we have been meeting together for a delicious meal, followed by uplifting discussion about the Christian faith. What I find particularly encouraging, is that nearly half the group

has only come in contact with our church during the pandemic. An example of how, even during the slow and frustrating times, the Lord is constantly at work in people's lives, and fulfilling his promise to build his church.

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For both congregations, much of the focus up to now was on getting through the pandemic. But now that most of church life is opening up again, we are excited to plan towards the future and seek God's will for us as churches in Blackrock and Bray.

#### **Please pray:**

- Give thanks to God for his faithfulness to us over the last two years, and for the strong community that there is in both congregations.
- Pray for those who did the Alpha course in Blackrock, that it will have a lasting impact on their faith, and that they will be effective ambassadors for the course in the future.
- Pray for the elders of both congregations as they develop a vision and mission plan for the future.