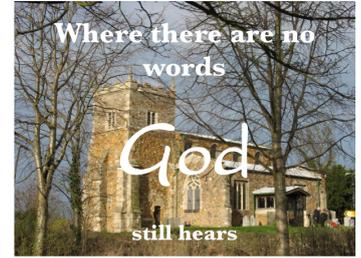




# Church Update

June 29th 2020



Dear Friends

The last few days have been turbulent for those of us looking after churches, clergy and officers alike, since the government decreed that churches and other religious buildings could open for private prayer and then very soon after that public worship would be permissible from 5th July. First of all, I am really grateful to the small group who came to clean the church and make it ready for private prayer. Since then we have been looking to the possibility of opening for public worship. However, things change very quickly and the city now finds itself in a Lockdown more restrictive than we might have imagined.

I have now received guidance from the Diocesan bishops and all churches within the lockdown area must close, which means that nothing can take place inside, not even private prayer. All Saints falls outside the lockdown boundary by a few hundred yards, but a great deal of the parish is within it. On advice, the Churchwardens and I have taken the decision that All Saints as a parish church must remain closed during the lockdown as it would be unreasonable to keep it open for the private prayer of those in the Harborough bit of the parish whilst excluding those within the city.

## After the local lockdown

I mentioned that before the lockdown was announced we had been looking at the possibility of opening for public worship. This presents a whole raft of different problems, especially for a Eucharistically focused community and it has become increasingly clear that the process will not be a quick one. This current spike in Leicester has confirmed that we are far from out of the woods and that we have to be convinced that, as a church, we are able to offer worship as safely as possible. The reintroduced local Lockdown has reinforced this more-so. In addition, recent surveys report that as many as 40% of worshippers will not feel confident to return to church buildings until a vaccine is found, which is some way off. So the Standing Committee of the PCC met via Zoom and discussed the way forward and the unanimous view was as follows:

- We will not rush to open for public worship. We need more guidance from the Church of England and to feel assured that we can welcome larger groups of people into the building safely.

- Opening relies on people volunteering to help with the cleaning and oversight of the building and it is difficult asking people to help when we don't know all this might entail.
- When we do feel able to open for worship things will undoubtedly be different and we may not, at first, be able to offer the Eucharist, depending on advice and how we are coping with the virus.
- We will review where we are towards the end of July and hope that we might be able to come together in the second half of August. But again, this is dependent on events.

I am sure this will be a disappointment to some, but our role as those with responsibility for All Saints is the safety and well-being of our people and we will find whatever ways we can to enable us to be fed as disciples of Jesus. It has been wonderful to hear of people now being able to meet in gardens or out for a walk and I know that meeting each other face-to-face is so important for our health and well-being. The local lockdown will put some of this on hold for the time-being, but it's so important that we remain in contact with each other one way or another.

## The Future

The main thing is that we remain positive and hopeful for the future - a future in which we continue to walk with the Lord Jesus, confident that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (*Rom 8:38-40*)

So we will be exploring other ways to support and encourage each other. We are blessed that this crisis has come at a time when we have the internet - what would this have been like 30 years ago? I realise that not everyone in our congregation is on-line and whatever we come up with, there will be resources for those relying on printed matter. However, we need also to make use of what is available and so I will be looking to develop our on-line resources so that we can continue to grow in faith and to encourage one another.

## Growing Together

I never imagined that I would be spending my 30th Anniversary of Ordination to the Priesthood writing a letter in circumstances like these, but one thing those 30 years have taught me is that we never stop learning as followers of Jesus. The journey through life as a disciple is constantly one of learning as we try to grow our faith and come closer to God. I wrote in the last Update, that there is a weekly Bible Study (we had the first one this morning - but you can join in later if you miss the first session). This will be delivered by **Zoom** and is not difficult at all to access if you have a connected device with a camera (be it PC, Mac, Tablet or even Smartphone). We have

now had a number of meetings via this technology and they have gone very well and even the most reluctant or technologically wary of us has coped admirably. So I encourage you, if you haven't already used it, to have a go. If you want any help then **please ask me** - I can guide you through the process. It is so important that we use what God has given us to support and encourage each other as we grow our faith and discipleship.

Finally, please do get in touch with me if you need to. I often hear it said that 'I didn't want to bother Fr Martin, he's so busy.' My job is to be here for you and so please don't be backward in coming forward!

So let us look to the future with hope, trusting in Him who holds us and loves us and may we use all means possible to be the Body of Christ in this place.

With my prayers and every blessing *Fr Martin*

A Prayer - "Putting our trust in God rather than ourselves"

*We thought we were in charge of our destiny, Lord;  
that we had all the answers,  
all the solutions to our problems,  
nothing being beyond our wit to solve.  
And no doubt in time we will beat this virus,  
as we have beaten many others,  
human ingenuity triumphing again over adversity.  
But this crisis of recent months has reminded us  
that we're not quite so much in control as we like to imagine;  
that life is less secure,  
less certain  
than we sometimes think,  
and that much of what we take for granted can be swept away in an instant.  
Help us to recognise our limitations as well as our achievements,  
our vulnerability as well as our strengths,  
and may we find in you one whose promises endure  
beyond the changes and chances of this fleeting world,  
enfolding us,  
and all things,  
in your eternal, unchanging love.  
Amen.*

*Excerpt From: Nick Fawcett. "For Such a Time as This". Apple Books.*