

October Update

Dear Friends

I hope you are all as well as can be and coping with the onset of autumn. I, for one, have tried not to put the heating on, but have not always been successful in that regard!

PCC

As we move into October we look to the next phase of our journey in a changed world and so the PCC met last night to look at the future and to continue dealing with the day-to-day issues of keeping the church running.

Our finances have, as you know, been hit in a big way, with no fundraising events having been possible for the past 6 months and no light at the end of the tunnel in that regard. However, we are actively searching for ways to work positively in difficult times. We noted that the diocese has also taken a huge hit financially, with investment income slashed as well as income from parish contributions. The expected impact of this is that our diocese will be around £1m worse off by the end of this year. This is bound to have implications for all parishes, so please keep up your generous giving so we can move into the future with some confidence.

APCM

Our Annual Parochial Church Meeting was not able to meet in April, but it will now take place on Sunday 11th October, after the Morning Service at 11.00am. I hope that a good number will be able to stay for this, but I understand if you can't.

WORSHIP

Since August we have been reopened for worship, but have been having non-Eucharistic worship, pending a review at last night's PCC. We heard peoples' perceptions of what we'd been doing and a whole range of words such as 'bare', 'sterile', 'no warmth', 'fear' and 'more sincere' were expressed as we tried to explain what it has felt like.

There is no doubt that things have been, and felt, very different. We are still having to get used to sitting apart and wearing masks, and these two things have a huge effect. We can no longer just look around and gauge how people are feeling, as we can only see eyes not expressions. There's no doubt about it, sitting apart from each other does contribute to a 'bare' or 'sterile' feeling. But these are things over which we have no control. What we have to do is learn to adapt (which isn't always easy) and to be grateful for the fact that at least we can come together as God's people to worship, to learn and to be.

We said a few weeks ago that the PCC would review our worship at the end of September and so we have. The result was an overwhelming desire to return to celebrating the Eucharist, though this was not unanimous. Therefore, from Sunday 11th October, we will return to celebrating the Eucharist at 10.00am, subject to strict guidelines from the Church of England and the Government.

I realise that not everybody will feel comfortable with this and so it is important to state that if you come to worship you do not have to receive communion. You can either stay seated or come up for a blessing. The choice is entirely yours and will be respected by all. Our aim is to provide what people are asking for, so for the time being, Wednesday evenings at 7.00pm will remain a time for Private Prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

For those who cannot come to church they will continue to receive worship resources for October in the post, or they can be downloaded from our website:

www.scraptoftchurch.org.uk

And please continue to let me know if you intend to come to church on a Sunday morning.

And so....

One final thing. Julie, our Safeguarding Officer, reminded us last night that safeguarding isn't just about DBS checks, safer recruiting and all the things we naturally associate with the subject. It is also about maintaining our well-being as a community. So she urged us to keep up our contacts, especially those who cannot come to church at the moment. We are the Body of Christ in this place and when one of us is in need then so are we all – we share one another's burdens and joys as Christ's disciples. So if suddenly think of someone you haven't seen for months, perhaps give them a ring or drop them a line. Isolation is one of the biggest dangers at a time like this and we can all help bring a little light into someone's day.

Otherwise, stay safe and take care

With every blessing

Fr Martin