

Dear friends

So now we have the rule of six... which sounds like some expanded version of the gang of four but of course is much more benign and is designed to save lives, not control them. It may be a bit of an inconvenience, but it is worth it, surely, if it means that fewer people get the virus and fewer people become really ill or die as a result. It is sometimes hard though to do as the saying goes: keep calm and carry on.

You may have already picked this up, but this new rule will not affect our ability to hold services in church. To quote Archbishop Justin Welby as he tweeted on Thursday, *"After contact with Government we hear that there is no change to guidance on places of worship. Worship is the work of God - not a social gathering - and gives the strength to love and serve."*

That got me thinking... is that what worship is for me?

The word 'worship' means 'giving worth to'. When we worship some thing or some one, we are admitting they are worth something to us. In a religious context, when I worship God I am putting him above all other things – you are the most worthy thing in my life.

The form of how we worship in church is often referred to as *liturgy*. This word comes from the Greek language and literally means 'the work of the people' or even 'public service'. So, when the Archbishop says that worship is work, surely he means that it is the work of the people to be God focussed, and that somehow this is a public service. That doesn't seem to make sense until you remember what Archbishop Justin actually said, "worship is the work of God" and that through worship somehow we gain "the strength to love and serve".

If both those are true, that worship is the work of the people and the work of God, then church becomes a place where people and God work together. From my own experience, when I truly worship, when church is not just a social gathering but is a God focused work of the heart, soul, mind and body, that is when God gets to work on me, forgiving, mending

strengthening, equipping and sending, so that I can go out and do God's work in the world whatever context I find myself in.

Now that we have more restrictions upon us, and the days are getting shorter and colder, and the virus seems to be on the rise again, now more than ever I need the work that church provides. Whether in the building, or at home on Zoom, or in the quiet of my own reflections I need God's work in my life even if it is just to keep calm and carry on, but hopefully for much more than that.. Thank you, Archbishop Justin for reminding me.

Moving on, but related... I am putting a new worship rota together if you would be happy to read or lead prayers either on Zoom or in Church then please let me know.

Our Annual Parochial Church Meeting is now set for Monday 5th October at 7.30pm and will be on Zoom. I had been wondering whether to do this from church so that anyone who is not online could join me in the building. However, although worship is exempt from the rule of six it seems that our APCM may not be covered. This means that those not online cannot be part of the proceedings – if that affects you adversely then I can only apologise.

Part of our meeting will be to elect new officers. We are in need of a second warden to join Suzanne as Caroline steps down after three years service. Lisa King is stepping down as Safeguarding Officer and this important role needs to be filled. Kate Houghton is stepping back from being Electoral Role Officer. We are also in need of some more PCC members and Deanery Synod representatives. Please do pray about all these roles and if you want to know more then please ring me for a chat.

Finally, a while ago I had a couple of open zoom sessions entitled "Discussions on the road" A few people have asked if we can have a regular opportunity to chat round themes pertinent to what is going on at the moment. I am thinking that fortnightly on a Tuesday evening would work best for me but I could be flexible. If you would like to part of that group , even if only occasionally, can you get back to me and we can start putting some dates in the diary.

A blessing from the Northumbria Community midday office:

Let nothing disturb thee, nothing affright thee;
All things are passing, God never changeth!
Patient endurance attaineth to all things
Who God possesseth nothing is wanting;
Alone God sufficeth.

Peter