

News Sheet number 20

So this is Christmas...

If you recognise these as the first words of a John Lennon Christmas song you'll know the next phrase is "and what have you done?". That's a loaded question for us this year! We have lived through a really extraordinarily challenging year, and we are realising that the challenges we have faced are not over yet and that they will impact us, everyone who lives in the United Kingdom and most people in the world very profoundly. Many aspects of who we are, what we do and what we think have been challenged and changed. I think it is fair to say that all of us have found ourselves in places of disorientation, uncertainty and anxiousness. Friends, family – biological, marital and biblical ("churchical" doesn't sound quite right) - become even more important when we need them most. And, my goodness do we need these friends and family members right now.

Our faith has been challenged and tested. But has it been found wanting? These were some of the words read from the bible in our churches yesterday:

Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings? In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him. Who is like you, LORD God Almighty? You, LORD, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you. Psalm 89:6b-9

"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."
"For no word from God will ever fail." Luke 1:32, 33, 37.

Canon James Nash
01553 673742:
james@churchinthewoottons.net
The Rectory, 47 Castle Rising Road,
South Wootton, PE30 3JA
rectoryoffice@churchinthewoottons.net

Christmas Edition

Closing our Churches again

COVID 19 infections are increasing significantly in Norfolk and its spread is reaching the Woottons and King's Lynn. We are hearing from the QEH that the pressure they are under at the moment due to COVID is greater than it was in March and April of this year. A mutation of the virus named new variant Covid may well have reached our area. Anecdotal evidence as well as official reports suggest that it has.

We all need to be very vigilant in adhering to the rules and guidelines we will be directed by under Tier 4 (effective from Boxing Day).

In the meantime our archdeacons, together with Graham, the Bishop of Norwich have written to all clergy emphasising the very grave threat posed by COVID at the moment. Bishop Graham included in his letter these words: **Thus, I give permission to incumbents, in consultation with their churchwardens and PCCs, to cancel services from today, and for the duration that we are in Tier 4, if that is what is determined locally. I would hope that an online alternative could be provided.**

On Christmas Eve I met with my ministry colleagues to discuss the possible closure of our churches for worship. With their support I took the very difficult decision to cease worship in church with immediate effect. This has meant the cancellation of our Midnight and Christmas Day services. We broadcast the filmed Christingle service and Dan is filming a service for Christmas Day. This difficult decision will be under constant review.

The Revd. Dan Tansey
01553 390615
dan@churchinthewoottons.net

www.churchinthewoottons.net
Facebook@churchinthewoottons



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Soul Friends – a new approach to caring for one another in Christ?

I talked last Sunday about Mary's visit to the home of her relative Elizabeth and how their meeting gave assurance and encouragement to both of them, and also how their encounter was blessed by the Holy Spirit. I then tried to say that I think that Mary and Elizabeth set a pattern that we could follow within our church. Have you got a particular friend in church who you always go to with exciting news? With that same friend do you trust them enough to talk with them confidentially?

When we sense God moving in our lives it is such a wonderful! Who can you talk to about your experience? Who will believe you? A friend who follows Jesus Christ, a friend who will know from their own experience that your own experience is real. In your conversation you can encourage one another.

I strongly believe that when Mary thought about her meeting with the Angel Gabriel she must have wondered to herself "did that really happen?" "Could what Gabriel told me really be true". Apart from those questions, in the cold light of day Mary would begin to realise the cost to her personally of what God had chosen her to do. She needed to talk to someone, and she chose just the right person in Elizabeth

Who for you is, or could be, the equivalent of Elizabeth within your church family?

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Some Items of news from our Recent PCC Meeting

1. We have been able to pay £5000 more than we did last year towards our Parish Share. This is a great achievement – thank you for your regular and generous giving, and for the one-off donations we have received.
2. The major project to repair All Saints Church's windows is nearly complete. Fairly minor work still outstanding will be finished in the new year
3. The Upper Room at All Saints Church has been refurbished and renewed with redecoration, a new carpet and furniture.
4. We need to establish a new area for cremated remains in All Saints churchyard. A potential area has been identified. Three new benches are going to be placed in the churchyard – each paid for with donations or legacies.
5. We are intending make broadband available in both churches. This will give us several benefits.

Julie Swinton

I am very pleased to be able to tell you that once she has finished her training and is ordained, Julie will be serving her curacy here with us in The Church in the Woottons. This means that Julie and her husband Ian will be with us for at least another 3 years. There is no pressure on Dan and his family to leave their house before Julie's ordination though, because she and Ian will remain living in their own home. Julie will be a non-stipendiary curate.

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01553 390615
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The Upper Room at All Saints Church



The Upper Room

Here is the newly re-designed, re-furbished and renewed upper room! We are very grateful for Roger who with support from Dan, Chester, Janet and many others, has brought a new vision for the Upper Room to fruition. The Upper Room is a sanctuary to be used for work with children, prayer, study, reflection – and anything else that blesses and will we pray be blessed by God. To help maintain the nature of the Upper Room as a sanctuary we ask that you remove your shoes before you enter. I'm sorry though, but we can't use it quite yet. Using the Upper Room is something for all of us to look forward to. Thank you, Roger, and your team.

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