

The Rectory
Saturday 23rd January 2021

A letter to everyone who is part of The Church in the Woottons

Dear all,

For many of us, it seems as though the pandemic is going from bad to worse. How different everything feels as 2021 gets underway. Last March we were all steeling ourselves for the initial lockdown; all of us were deeply concerned about the threat of the new virus. Maybe though, at the same time, we were appreciating many aspects of our lives as the world around us shut down, the roads became strangely silent, and suddenly many of us had more time on our hands.

Now though, although the vaccination is well underway and medical understanding of the virus, and treatment of those infected with it, has come on leaps and bounds, there is a tangible level of fear and uncertainty amongst all of us. I daresay, we are all thoroughly fed up with being in lockdown, and all its associated restrictions. Many more of us are being affected directly or indirectly by this pernicious and deadly virus – especially the new variant of Covid 19. And our local hospital, and NHS services, are under a bewildering level of pressure. Today, our news is full of questions over how lethal the new variant is, and whether the government is making the best decisions about the administration of the vaccine. All this is threatening to grind us all down - if it isn't grinding us down already.

I think we all recognise that it is going to be a long time before we can put the pandemic behind us, and once again be relaxed in the company of others. We are impatient to do all the many things we long to do again, without apprehension or restriction. But that time will come.

As part of The Church in the Woottons we are a family, a community of faith, and we are in communion with one another. Our shared joys and sorrows, our hopes and dreams, and most of all, our understanding of God in Jesus Christ, and the eternal life he invites all of us to share in, are all expressed and enacted in our services of Holy Communion. For a long time now, we only been able to offer each of you bread when we hold services in church. For many Sundays last year, we offered you filmed services – many of them services of Holy Communion during which Dan and I broke bread and poured out wine on behalf of all of us.

This year, during our third lockdown, we are meeting each Sunday by way of a live streamed services on Zoom – and most of these will be services of Holy Communion. From tomorrow morning, when the priest has consumed the bread and wine, music will be played for a period of 3 or 4 minutes. During this time, I invite you to reflect on what Holy Communion means to you personally, and how best you can engage with this holy meal whilst we are still in lockdown.

I continue to pray for you; and I ask that you pray for me, and for Dan as we seek to offer love, ministry and leadership to the church we lead.

With my love to each one of you

James