



Dear friends

### **We shall not lose them**

Since I announced that the services will be livestreamed from the church building, not from the Rectory from this Sunday, many friends told me how much they appreciated and enjoyed the services we have been sharing over the last couple of months. Thank you so much for all those encouraging and kind messages.

Over the last 12 months of this journey, it has become absolutely clear to us now that the Eucharist celebrated in an ordinary home can be as holy and appropriate as the Eucharist celebrated in a grand cathedral. We have been blessed, comforted and inspired by the co-presence of the homeliness and holiness in our offering of the Eucharist; a child's curious look and innocent response at the presence of the sacrament; the endless love and grace of God to us revealed in the imperfect, humble but genuine offering of our worship and prayer. I really believe, friends, that was our moments of encountering God in this unexpected journey in the wilderness just like the people of Israel did when they were wandering in the wilderness after coming out of Egypt.

It appears that the landscape will gradually start changing. We will slowly come out of the wilderness. We are not there yet. And there will be still significant challenges ahead of us. But things will be a little bit different than how they were 12 months ago. And we must not lose or forget what we experienced, learnt and discovered about our God, ourselves and our worship.

All those precious lessons, discoveries, messages and experiences we shared in this journey taught us so much about the heart of worship and the Church. And it is my hope and vision as much as everyone's that those priceless lessons and reminders will be kept, reflected and incorporated in our worship, in the life of our church in the future. So friends, let's keep reminding ourselves and each other of this. We cannot and will not go back. God is leading us to new pastures. Let's keep praying and exploring together. Let's not be afraid of making mistakes along the way! As we long for new life and new hope, let us also be renewed in our worship so we may always remember how God delivered us and walked with us.

*Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. (Exodus 8.1)*

## **Bishop's message**

I received a regular communication from Bishop Donald. He reminded us that although there are many encouraging signs of hope, we shouldn't be complacent or let our guards down.

*Dear friends*

### ***June and Beyond***

*Freedom, they cry, forgetting to read the small print. Yes indeed, all things being well, the coronavirus restrictions will be lifted in the summer. But I doubt that we will going back fully to what we remember pre-2020. Working groups of scientific researchers and advisers are studying all sorts of topics, including whether annual autumn covid vaccinations will be needed, whether face coverings and social distancing might need to be maintained through next winter and beyond, and more.*

*Are the American scientists right that the new California variant is even more transmissible than the South Africa one? Is Angela Merkel right in saying that Germany is now seeing a third wave of the pandemic? Is the rapid increase in cases in France another sign of this? Look at the figures and graphs for the flu pandemic of 1918-1920, which had four waves over a full two years. Yes, thank God for the researchers and the drug companies: we have effective vaccines, and more on the way. These will greatly decrease the death toll, and the pressure on hospitals, but they can only dampen the effects of the pandemic, and they will be playing catch-up with new variants. Yes, thanks to doctors and medical science, we now have much more effective treatments for covid-19, thus less need for intensive care, and higher recovery rates. We won't see anything like the appalling death rate of a century ago. But covid won't be over by this summer.*

*Please don't let brides-to-be think that they can have a packed church later this year. They might be able to, but it is quite possible that one-metre distancing and mask wearing will be a condition of "unlimited" numbers in church for public worship and for baptisms, weddings and funerals. The same could well apply to other public gatherings, and even for celebrations and services at Christmas. I very much doubt that we will be back to using the common cup at Holy Communion during 2021: I'm deeply sad about that, but want to be realistic rather than blindly optimistic. It is better to be cautious than to raise hopes then disappoint people.*

### ***Hebrews Q&A***

*Chrys Tremththanmor, our CMD Officer, has kindly arranged a couple of Saturday morning Zoom meetings for questions and answers on my Lent Bible studies on Hebrews. The first, on 13 March, is for those who will have seen the whole series of seven talks by that date. The second, on 17 April, is for those who will have gone through the studies week by week during Lent. Please make these meetings known if you are using, or encouraging private use of, the Hebrews studies in your parish. People will need to book in advance to attend, but that is easy and free: [13 March](#) and [17 April](#)*

*It would help to receive questions in advance, so they can be grouped thematically. There may be time for live questions on the day, but advance questions will get priority. Please email questions to [Chrys.Tremththanmor@peterborough-diocese.org.uk](mailto:Chrys.Tremththanmor@peterborough-diocese.org.uk)*

### ***Maundy Thursday – 1 April***

*As last year, we won't be blessing the oils on Maundy Thursday, but we will have two Zoom services, one for each archdeaconry, for the Reaffirmation of Ordination Vows. This will be Archdeacon Gordon's last Holy Week with us before he retires, so I have asked him to give the homily at both services. I will lead, and Bishop John will pray for us all.*

### ***Episcopal Visits***

*Bishop John and I are receiving requests to come out to services over the summer. We are looking at diaries and the emerging rules for the relaxation of lockdown, and have some preliminary conclusions. We are bearing in mind the general principle of not travelling too far or becoming vectors of transmission from one community to another, and also the question of how to prioritise our visits. Our initial thinking is that we will prioritise: summer ordinations, late summer and autumn licensing of new Readers and Lay Ministers (some on these in person, some by Zoom), and catching up on confirmations (which haven't happened since March last year). We will also want to be available for preaching online as well as for visits, because we want to encourage online worship to continue. More details next week, but you might like to think about encouraging and preparing candidates for confirmation over the autumn and winter.*

### ***Paul Barber***

*I am sad to report the death of Paul Barber (85), Bishop of Brixworth from 1989 until his retirement in 2001. Paul and Pat then moved to Street in Somerset, where he served as honorary assistant bishop in the Diocese of Bath and Wells. In 2018 they moved back to*

*their home area in Surrey. Paul died on 22 February with Pat at his side. A memorial service will take place when possible: more information at [PEBMemorial@gmail.com](mailto:PEBMemorial@gmail.com).*

*With love in Christ +Donald*

## **Mothering Sunday next week**

I am delighted that leaders of the Guides and uniformed organisations as well as our Mothers' Union will contribute to our online service on this coming Mothering Sunday. I would like also invite anyone who wish to contribute to the service to share anything with me to make this service special and enjoyable.

If you would like to share anything to mark this year's mothering Sunday. For example, a photo of flowers or a drawing; a photo something you did for your mum (if you cooked breakfast or something) or if there is anything you have or did in memory of your mum; if you have something that tells you about your mum, a poem or story, a video, anything! Please do share them with me by sending me an email with your message at [prayandwork@gmail.com](mailto:prayandwork@gmail.com) Then I will share them during the Mothering Sunday service.

## **Prester's Lockdown Musings: What do you think**

*During lockdown some people have had their hands full at home, either home educating or home working, or both. Others have had the luxury of more free time. But what to do with it? There's a limit to the number of times you can tidy the fridge / garage/ loft (delete as appropriate.) Perhaps you've dusted off those board games you haven't played for years, or tried your hand at a new language – or maybe just a new recipe or two. There's always reading, of course, and you'd expect me, as a reader to mention the spiritual disciplines of bible reading and prayer. But the activity I want to mention is thinking – including thinking about what things we think about.*

*Jesus said the greatest commandment was that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart soul mind and strength (Mark 12:30.) Four times in Matthew's gospel Jesus asks his followers "What do you think?" Much of his teaching is given not in propositions but parables. You have to think through how the parables of the Good Samaritan or the prodigal son might apply to you, for example. We can safely assume that while he was growing up Jesus had a good example of reflecting on things which were important: Luke's gospel tells us that his mother Mary treasured the stories of his early life in her heart (2: 51.)*

*As we move from the gospels to the epistles, the same thing emerges. The apostle Paul says "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:1.) He told the Philippians to "have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had" (Philippians 2:5.) 2 Peter was written to stimulate its readers to wholesome thinking (3:1.) Taking all these examples together, it is clear that what and how we think is important to God, arguably as important as what we do. But when it comes to sermons or articles or books on living the Christian life, more emphasis is given to how we behave than how we think.*

*I think (!) it's time we realised just how important our thinking is. It's so easy, in these exceptional times, either to leave our thinking to another day or to indulge in patterns of thinking which are negative, unhelpful, not worthy of the God we serve. Locked up under house arrest, awaiting trial, the apostle Paul could have given way to unhelpful thinking. Yet the letter he wrote to the Philippians is possibly the most joyous book in the whole of scripture. Nearing the end of the letter, Paul writes: "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things" (4:8.)*

*The converse is also true: we should avoid or limit our exposure to the untrue ("fake news"), the incorrect, the impure, and so on. At the end of a day (or week) it's good practice to think over not only what we have (or haven't) done, but what has been occupying our thoughts, and to offer them to God. "May the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord." (Psalm 19:14.) Amen. Prester, 28 Feb 2021*

Friends, it might feel more tiring and difficult as we get closer to the first point of recovery. It feels always much harder when you get closer to the line. I feel the same way. Let us remind of ourselves, just how far we have come. Let's take one step at a time, one moment at a time. Jesus is with you. He is offering himself to you, giving you the strength, courage and joy you need. May God bless you and all those whom you pray for.

With love in Christ

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