



Dear friends

As I write this letter to you the sun is beautifully shining outside. The weather has become much more Spring like compared to how it was a few weeks ago when we had that strange almost blizzard like snow. As the weather improves so does the Covid-19 situation. Children are back to school. Care homes are now open to visitors. Shops are open. But most importantly many people are now vaccinated at least once although (and some of you twice already) there are quite a significant number of people who haven't yet.

So there are a lot to give thanks for. As we give thanks for the progress and improvement of the situation, we are reminded of what lies behind those progress and improvement. This morning I saw a video about the National Covid Memorial Wall. It is just on the opposite side of the House of Parliament in London. The wall stretches more than a third of a mile along the South Bank of the River Thames. This wall consists of 150,000 hearts, each heart representing a person who died because of the virus. Each heart was individually painted by hand. Each heart was unique just like the loved ones we have lost. It is remarkable that this was created by volunteers. Archbishop Justin who walked the wall said, "It's been completely overwhelming. I was unprepared for the visual force of this wall. Because it's high and it is above us, it feels like a wave of grief and sorrow breaking over us. To talk about feeling inspired is... It is much more than that."

We all have been through what was truly a terrible winter. And now with the new sings of hope of Easter and Spring, we can take a breather with people whom we missed so much. As we enjoy and appreciate all this, let us do so with a thankful heart. Let us give a time to recover and recharge to ourselves and to our souls as well as others'. Let us be gentle, kind and considerate to ourselves and to others so that we can recharge and regain strength. Because we will need that strength and energy again later some time this year. As the Prime Minister said recently, there is a possibility of the third wave in this year. We do not know when or how. What is happening in India is a strong reminder that the global pandemic is still on going. But right now, it is very important that we take time to recharge and restore over this Spring and Summer by acknowledging what has happened and how God has got us through in gratitude, prayer and faith. And as we do so, let us keep other countries and the people in those countries who

are still in the vicious grip of the second wave in our prayers.

### **Future Pastoral Letter and Delivery**

During the lockdown I wrote to you almost every week although not always on the same day of the week. Now we are coming out of the lockdown, I will aim to write it not every week but every 2 or 3 weeks. I very much hope to keep this pastoral letter even after when the pandemic is over (and it will). By that time, this pastoral letter will have become like more like a monthly or quarterly bulletin published on a fixed date.

I am very grateful for all those who very kindly have been delivering this letter as a hard copy to those who cannot access the electronic version. If you felt that you didn't get the pastoral letter on time or if you felt that the letter was late then it is not their fault but only mine. I aim to publish each letter by Friday but sometimes it was not possible because sometimes I had to write to you twice or even three times during the lockdown as the situation changed so quickly and sometimes I had to prioritise other duties. But the main focus of our pastoral letter is the pastoral touch and relationship we maintain through it rather than the immediacy or promptness of it.

### **Thy Kingdom Come Movement**

Some of you may have heard of this movement. It is a prayer movement introduced by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York a few years ago. It is about the 11 days between the Ascension day and the day of Pentecost. The Scripture tells us that during that period, the disciples prayed together earnestly. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon them through which they were strengthened and filled with the Spirit. They were joined by new believers day by day and all of them worked together for the Kingdom. Picking up this tradition, the Thy Kingdom Come Movement invites us all to focus on praying during those 11 days between Ascension and Pentecost. We are encouraged particularly to pray for those whom we know that they may come to faith in Christ and that we may be re-energised and filled with the Spirit to build God's Kingdom.

Since this movement was introduced by the two Archbishops, Christians from different traditions and denominations joined in. Now it is a global movement of prayer shared by churches from Roman Catholic to Anglican, from Baptist to Greek Orthodox.

This movement is not only for grown ups. Children can join in too. This year they have created a great video resources as well as some exciting activity packs. Please find the information sheet attached. Also you can watch the first episode of the video series which you can enjoy with your children. Here: <https://vimeo.com/528774133/baf1d57af5>

It also of course provides wonderful resources which we can simply follow in prayer. I have attached one of the materials, Novena, in this email.

I hope that there will be an opportunity for us to find more out about this movement and have the opportunity to take part. The Novena is available as hard copy and I am planning to order some. If you are interested in joining in this Thy Kingdom Come movement, please do let me know.

### **Plans for the Junior Church**

It has been such a long time since our children gathered as the Junior Church. We are hoping that we could reopen our Junior Church. We hope that we could gather outside the building, in the churchyard (weather permitting) once in every month.

You will need to book in advance just like attending the service inside the building. We are hoping that we could create two groups within the Junior Church (under 7 and over 7). It will be really helpful if we could have helpers as we will be outside. If this is something that you are interested in, would you please let me know so that I can include you as we develop our plans further. I will let you know the details about dates in the coming weeks.

### **Service for the Prince Philip**

Last Friday, on the eve of the funeral of the Duke of Edinburgh, we had a small prayer service for him and for those who lost their partners. During the service, we shared our own experiences about him with each other. It was striking to realise how many lives were touched by a single person. He was there when a husband of our friend was in the Navy. He was there when a son of our friend was graduating. He was there when our friend was invited to the Palace for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Ceremony. He talked to them. He shook hands with them. He presented a medal to them. And yet he was always ready to follow his wife, Her Majesty, the Queen rather than promoting himself. As Archbishop Justin said, he was a great example of Christian service. May he rest in peace and rise in glory with all faithful disciples of Christ.

## **Friends of Holy Land**

The Friends of Holy Land has sent us a message, thanking for the donation they received from us. Here is the message.

*Friends of the Holy Land would like to thank all parishioners of Abington who donated, raising £250.00 for Christians in the Holy Land. Your generous donation will help support them through this time of anxiety and no income, giving them the means to carry on and hope for the future. Conditions are extremely challenging there currently, especially as they face another Easter season without pilgrims. Please continue to remember FHL and those we support in your prayers.*

## **Zoom coffee session**

We are now gathering in the church but still quite a number of friends join online. Bob has very kindly offered that he will continue to host our Zoom Coffee Session following the service every Sunday for the time being. Those who attended the service at church will be still welcome to join when you are back home. The code and password are always the same.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86378391972?pwd=MllwVVh6WFFCUFFJEMFo1TEl0RERHZz09>

Meeting ID: 863 7839 1972

Passcode: 355688

## **APCM**

Our APCM will take place on Sunday the 23<sup>rd</sup> May at 11 am after the Sunday service. Those who book their seats for the service on 23 May are encouraged to stay on for the APCM which shouldn't take long. We should have more available seats for this as the further relaxation of social distancing rules are expected from 17<sup>th</sup> May.

Those who wish to stand or re-stand for election for the PCC membership, please do be in touch with Melissa (at [mTallack2@anglianwater.co.uk](mailto:mTallack2@anglianwater.co.uk)) or with me (on 01604 621265) in advance, our PCC secretary so that we would be aware who is standing and make appropriate preparations.

Please send all reports to Melissa by 1 May.

## **Special PCC Meeting**

We will have a short special PCC meeting on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> May just after the service to approve the annual reports for the APCM. Please book your seats with Dianne.

With love in Christ

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