



Dear friends

### **When we look back on all this**

It is good to speak to you in this way again. As you may have noticed, it has been a bit over a month since the last pastoral letter. Restaurants and Cafes are open. People can visit other people's homes. Some people are back to their offices. More and more are travelling again for work, or for holidays. Although there are still many restrictions, a lot is happening now. I have also been involved in many things that were postponed over the last few months. In person meetings, pastoral visits, weddings, services in other places, schools. All this means, we have to constantly readjust ourselves and our life as the circumstances keep changing. This takes time and energy. This is why I was unable to write you as often as I wished I could. But it is something that I would like to continue.

Some of you may already know this, but my family and I had a lovely family holiday in Cornwall for a week. But before we went on our holiday there were some concerns and doubts. We were a bit worried about how we could manage the journey because it is a long way from here to get there with two young children. And we have never been to Cornwall before! There was going to be G7 Summit which might mean some disruptions. And I had to conduct a wedding on the day we were going to leave Northampton. Many things seemed so uncertain and unknown. There were moments when I was feeling a bit unsure or even worried.

Now I am looking back, the truth is, we had a wonderful time together. Everything we were concerned about was actually much more positive than we thought it might be. The journey to Cornwall wasn't so bad. We took only two breaks, which was less than we thought we might need. The children took the journey very well, which was a surprise to me, and Simona, given sometimes how difficult things can get even at home. We left Northampton around 12.30 pm after the wedding because the wedding couple very kindly agreed to move their wedding time a bit forward for me (Thank you! Mr and Mrs. Ryan!). I am so glad that I was able to conduct their wedding. It was such a lovely wedding, and I was able to leave with a really good feeling and smile on my face. And because we were leaving a bit later than others, the journey was so smooth, and the roads were so empty. Yes, there were challenges and there were moments when

we felt a bit stressed, but we not only survived the journey but also made lovely memories together as a family.

It has been nearly 17 months since our lives were put under restrictions because of the virus. We are still living through it, and things are still very raw to talk about, even the possibility of looking back on all this. There are still many things that look uncertain and unknown. But God promises us that he will never stop working. He will bring something new and fresh through us in the midst of a difficult situation. There WILL be a point when we will look back on this time and realise that there are lots of precious memories that we were able to make, and share God's love and kindness together, even in the most difficult time in generations. There will be a point when we will realise that we were able to overcome and survive this crisis together and were even able to create something fresh and good out of the tragedy through God's grace.

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways,"  
declares the Lord.*

*"As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

*As the rain and the snow  
come down from heaven,  
and do not return to it  
without watering the earth  
and making it bud and flourish,  
so that it yields seed for the sower  
and bread for the eater,*

*so is my word that goes out from my mouth:  
It will not return to me empty,  
but will accomplish what I desire  
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

*You will go out in joy  
and be led forth in peace; (Isaiah 55. 9-12)*



## **What happens when the restrictions are lifted as planned on 19 July?**

I know some of you were a bit disappointed that the parish picnic had to be postponed following the government's decision to postpone the further relaxation of restrictions. Since then, there has been a lot of talk about what might happen when the restrictions are lifted, which is planned to happen on 19 July. The newly appointed Health Secretary said to the MPs lately that it is likely that the restrictions will be lifted as planned on 19 July.

For some people, this might come as great news. But for other people, this might sound not so great news. On top of that, there seems to be a big difference between people's expectations about what life should be like after 19 July. Some even call it the 'Freedom Day'. Although I do understand the yearning and the longing lying behind that language, I am not sure if that is the wisest choice of words.

If 'freedom' means being free from the virus, then that would simply be a false hope because the virus won't just go away on 19 July. Many scientists are quite confident in saying that the virus is here to stay. The question is, how should we learn to live with it? We cannot eradicate the common cold, flu or other viruses. But we have learnt how to live with them, although people do still die from them from time to time. The difference between Covid variants and other viruses is that there is still much we don't know about this virus, what it is capable of doing, and how we can change our lives to make it more difficult for it to reproduce itself.

As I said above, we will eventually learn how to control it and how to live with it, just as we have learnt how to live with other viruses. But it will take time. Meanwhile there will be people who will still fall ill and, unfortunately, lose their lives. The latest statistics show that people are still being hospitalised and dying, even after two doses of vaccinations. Recently, the news reader, Andrew Marr shared his experiences with the Delta variant. He is fully vaccinated and yet he became quite ill after being infected by the Delta variant during the G7 meeting. (You can read his story here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-57640550>)

The reason why I am saying this is not to make you feel more worried or scared, but to assure you that at Abington we will take things slowly and cautiously in the coming months after 19 July. This means that there could be times in the coming months when some people might feel things are moving a bit too slowly and perhaps feel a little bit frustrated by our pace of moving as a church. One of the greatest challenges for me, as Rector, in leading the church during the time of the pandemic was to discern the wise way forward when there were so many different opinions and views on how we should move forward. I could really feel for other leaders in

governments and other organisations.

We will get through this eventually. And we want to get to the other side together with our friends. Some of us are feeling quite positive and confident. It is great that we can have some of our normalities back: visiting each other, travelling, seeing different places. Some of us are actually quite busy already with our work. And there is a real risk for people, potentially, to overwork with all the combination of online and offline meetings. But some of us still feel concerned and cautious. If we move too quickly after 19 July then it could make those who are already feeling worried and exposed, even more anxious and worried. And this will counter the whole purpose, because our aim of moving quickly would simply be to get together in a fuller sense, and to rejoice together in those things that we weren't allowed to share. But if we move slowly, then it will allow people to have time and space to observe how the world is moving on and making progress, and this will lead to building our confidence together as a community. That will provide much more solid ground for us to build something for the future.

These are just my personal thoughts, but I imagine once we spend another winter this year with this virus, then we will be able to get the feel of how effective the vaccination programme is and, therefore, how we will be able to live together with this virus. I imagine, then, there will be a time when we will look at Covid not so differently from how we look at other viruses like the cold or flu. But it will take time.

So, rather than calling 19th July 'Freedom Day', perhaps a wiser way to describe life afterwards, borrowing from the words of one of the greatest leaders of this country, is 'the end of the beginning' of our fight against the global pandemic. There are so many people in the world who are still suffering and struggling to get basic medical support. So many people have lost their jobs and their livelihood because of the pandemic. The well-being, and development, of so many children has been affected by the pandemic. Our freedom, in its real sense, will depend on how we respond, as a community, as a society, and as the people of God to the needs of our neighbours, the elderly, the children, and the struggling families. We want to choose to walk together with them even though it takes a bit more time.

### **APCM Election Results and Thanks**

We had our APCM on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May. We gave thanks for everything that God has done and shown for us over the last two years through the good work of the good people of Abington. We also gave thanks for Dianne who served as one of our churchwardens for a long time; who

helped us through these challenging times through her dedication, kindness and hard work. I am very grateful to her, and so glad that she will continue to be involved as one of our Deputy Wardens and through other work that she has been doing.

I would also like to thank Malc Ward, Alan Sutton and Ashley Ashiru, who served on the PCC for a long time; who always helped us to discern God's will through their wisdom and dedication and by sharing their many gifts and experiences with us. Thank you.

I am delighted to announce that the following people are duly elected for these respective positions.

### **Churchwardens**

Jim Mercer and Donald Loe

### **PCC members**

Andrew Munns, Dianne Ward, Elizabeth Loe, Douglas Rutherford, Susie McKay, Cathy Tinsley, Emmanuel Agudosy, Paul Tharby, Sue Harrison

### **Deanery Synod Representatives**

Liz Kelly, Damian Pickard, Bob Purser, Peter Aiers

### **Patronal Festival: Sunday 27 June**

This Sunday 27 June was our Patronal Festival. We welcomed Canon Beverley who has been newly installed as the Rector of St. Peter's, Weston Favell, to be our guest preacher. I was delighted that she accepted my invitation to be the celebrant of the Eucharist on this occasion as a sign of our solidarity between SS. Peter and Paul, Abington and St. Peter's, Weston Favell. It was also a joy to welcome our Junior Church.

### **Anna Chaplain**

Liz, our Lay Pastoral Minister, has been leading many areas of ministry in our parish for which we are all very grateful. She has been particularly passionate about ministering to the elderly and has been carrying out a variety of missionary activities in the parish in this area. This led her to discern that she is being called to be an Anna Chaplain; a title that is given to someone who specializes in the ministry to the elderly.

I am delighted to announce that she has been now commissioned as the Anna Chaplain during the service at our Patronal Festival. She is the very first Anna Chaplain in this Diocese. Please congratulate her and pray for her as she goes forward from this another milestone in her ministry, a mark of her dedication and devotion for Christ's Church.

Many congratulations to Liz. May God bless her and her ministry always.

### **Summer Churchyard Project No.1: Prayer Ribbons**

Our churchyard is loved by so many. Thanks to the fantastic and dedicated work of Janet, Jackie, Gordon, and many others, it has been a place of beauty, rest and meditation that gives a sense of tranquility and peace to all those who visit. It also has become a place of art thanks to the brilliant work of Celia, Derek, Stephanie, Mary, and their friends. I know now that so many people really look forward to what will be popping up the next day in the churchyard and what gospel message it will share with them. It is also now a place of enjoyment for children and families, thanks to the creative and wonderful work of Susie, Cathy and Esme. So many families now really appreciate the trails that we installed. I know many families who never actually put a step into the churchyard before, did so, thanks to those trails and activities offered in the churchyard.

On top of all this, we are offering a new project that involves Prayer Ribbons. Over the next 7 weeks, starting from our Patronal Festival day, we will be thinking about what we can pray for. Each Sunday will have a theme. And after each Sunday service, we will be invited to take a ribbon and tie it to a railing in the churchyard as a sign of our prayers. This will make our churchyard effectively a prayer station, which will become a sign inviting people to take part by placing their ribbon on the railings. There will be a bag of ribbons for the public to take part. The idea is that we will have beautiful coloured railings with a rainbow of colours in a few weeks.

The theme of each week is as follows. Each Sunday's sermon will be in line with the theme.

27 June: Praying with Gratitude (Patronal Festival)

4 July: Praying for Forgiveness

11 July: Praying for Healing

18 July: Praying for Creation (Outdoor Service)

25 July: Praying for Young People

1 August: Praying for Peace

8 August: Praying for the Elderly

Since we launched Ribbons of Prayers last Sunday, so many people in the community already took part and responded so warmly. It has been only less than a week and already there are more than 200 ribbons tied to the railings.



### Summer Churchyard Project No.2: Panda Prayer Trail

Some of you may have already seen this. Inside the churchyard, we are offering the Panda Prayer Trail, where children can follow and learn about prayer with cute panda characters. It was originally designed by Coventry Diocese and has been adapted by Susie. Please do come and follow the trail with your children or grandchildren. It would be a lovely way to spend a summer afternoon, or morning, and reconnect with God.

### Summer Churchyard Project No.3: New Churchyard Art

There is now a new churchyard art installation which is simply astonishing. It is created by Celia, Derek, Stephanie, and Mary. Our huge thanks to them and to all who contributed to this artwork. The art is a reminder of God's outpouring blessing upon us, and the gift of the Holy Spirit that always gives us a new life and a new hope. It also symbolizes our hope to be set free and to release those who are feeling isolated and oppressed for whatever reason in the current situation we are in. And finally, it reminds us of what Jesus told us about how God cares for us and loves us. Why don't you come and see what God says to you through this art?





## Dates for the Junior Church for children and young people

Our Junior Church gathers every last Sunday of the month during this summer season. We gather outside, weather permitting. A few weeks ago, our children had such a wonderful and fun time together at their first Junior Church gathering in a long time. One child said, "it was just so lovely to meet friends and be together again!" The dates for our next Junior Church are the following. Please let Cathy know in advance so that she can welcome you and your children!

Her email is [cathytinsley18@gmail.com](mailto:cathytinsley18@gmail.com)

Junior Church Dates:

27 June, 25 July, 29 August.

All Sundays at 10 am.



## Outdoor services

Many of you will still remember the services we had in our churchyard during the lockdown last year. It was not only lovely to worship together in the sun, but also a great witness to the community, showing that the church is here to pray for, and bless, the community. I remember the people very warmly responding to us as we prayed for them at the end of the service. It is one of those things that we don't want to lose. So, we will offer outdoor services in the coming months. Given the significant amount of effort and preparation it takes to take the service outside, we decided to go for two outdoor services this year. We might have our Harvest Festival as another outdoor service, and this will be confirmed closer to the date. Please make a note of the following dates in your diary. Don't forget you will still need to book your place so that we can make preparations.

**Outdoor Service dates:** 18 July, 5 September. 3 October(TBC). All dates are subject to weather conditions.

## Messy Church for children, young people, and families



We are planning to have two Holiday Messy Church in August for children, young people, and families in Abington. It will be a lovely relaxing time where children can meet with other children, having a lot of fun together while taking part in different activities based on the theme of miracles!

The two dates that we are looking at are **Monday 2 August** from 10 am to 12 pm and **Monday 16 August** from 10 am to 12 pm.

We need to know roughly how many will be able to come to these events so that we can see whether the dates are suitable and make preparations.

Would you please kindly let me know if these dates are suitable for you/your children and whether you would be interested in coming to them?

I know some of you have already responded. Thank you.

### **Mary Hewson's death**

I am sad to announce that Mary Hewson, who was a long-time member of the Mothers' Union of Abington, and of the church, died on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May. Her funeral took place in church on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June. Liz and I were able to share the last moments of her life and gave her the Last Rites. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

### **Message from Peter Lawley**

I received a message from Peter who was a member of Abington Young Christian groups. He asked me to pass on his message to you and send his warm greetings to old friends at Abington.

*Dear Fr. Kim,*

*As a former Abington Young Christians member and Leader, I was pleased to see from your website that Young Christians still seems to be active and flourishing.*

*As a result of my own involvement at Abington, and YC's especially, I was recommended for Ordination by the late Fr. Frank Pickard, and have recently retired from Ministry here now in the Lichfield Diocese.*

*I have been sorting out some records from the past, and have a number of 35mm colour slides of Young Christians activities dating from 1974 / 1976, notably of country hikes, and of holidays at Porthallow, Cornwall, with Dianne Ward, and the then curate, the Revd. John Harper which might be of interest to someone?*

*These are of no interest to anyone else apart from me and Abington, and as I have not been very good at maintaining my links with Abington once my parents passed away*

*(Sheila & Gerald Lawley 2004/2007 respectively), I wonder if the parish might be interested in them for any archival purpose, as it seems a shame just to discard them.*

*If Dianne Ward is still actively involved with the parish, then she might be interested from a personal point of view, and now that I am retired, perhaps I may be able to find time to return to Abington In due course!*

*My era at Peter & Paul spanned the era of Frs. Hamerton and Pickard, although my familial links with the parish go back much further into the 1940's and we're just looking at pictures of my parents wedding there in 1946!*

*My title post at Ordination was at St. John's, Peterborough, where I met and married my wife, so we also have Peterborough in common.*

*Then, the fearsome Canon Stallard was Vicar, followed by the rather more amenable Ernie Orland, and later, the Revd. David Miller from Abington. As +Douglas Feaver said at the time, St. John's was very good at a little bit of everything that represents the Church of England, and so it proved, as I enjoyed life there very much, with the links to the Cathedral across the square.*

*I have written far too much now, but if you want to pass my contact details onto Dianne Ward if that is feasible, or reply yourself if you wish, please do.*

*With every blessing on your ministry at Abington,*

*Best wishes, Peter Lawley, Telford, Shropshire. (01952) 606160*

If you wish to get in touch with Peter, his email address is peterlawley12@gmail.com

## **Visit to Abington Vale School and your gifts to children**

On Wednesday 23 June, I visited Abington Vale Primary School to meet the Year 6 students who will be leaving the school at the end of the term. I passed on the booklets that you bought for them out of your generosity, which include the messages you wrote for them out of your kindness and love. The children were so excited and surprised by the messages you wrote. It was a joy to see the smiles on their faces! Leah, who visited the school with me, who is the director of the Light House Trust that leads this project to help the school leavers, wrote a letter to thank you all for your generosity and kindness in supporting the children. Out of your generosity, we raised £119.70 which is three times more than the actual cost for the booklets we were asked for.

*To all at St Peter and St Paul's,*

*I just wanted to write and personally thank you for stepping up and buying a Scripture Union Transitions book for every year six child at Abington Vale Primary. The children absolutely loved the book and were touched by the personal messages inside. Your love*

*and support has made a memorable impact on both the children and the school alike.*

*When Reverend Jun handed me the cheque for the books as well as the additional giving you wanted to share with Lighthouse Trust I was overwhelmed. Your giving reminded me of the words Paul wrote to the church in Philippi when they recognised his work with the gospel and gave in abundance:*

*"For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own they pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations." (2Corinthians 8 v3-5)*

*I will put your money towards books that were bought for other schools, but the churches were not able to give.*

*I am really looking forward to meeting you all in person when I come to speak in July.*

*Until then, thank you again, and God bless your loving hearts,*

*Leah Peters (Director of Lighthouse Trust (Northampton))*

I have attached her original letter to this email. I am also pleased that I will be able to visit the school and meet children on a regular basis starting from the next term. I look forward to developing the link further with our local schools.

### **More seats available for Sunday services**

Dianne wanted to let us know that there were more seats available for the last few Sundays. I know many of you have been very considerate and kind, letting others have seats. Thank you so much for your kindness and thoughtfulness. As we now have more seats available since we increased our capacity, following the relaxation of the restrictions, perhaps you will consider making bookings more often than you did before.

### **AV Upgrade in the church building**

During the lockdown, we really discovered the potential of Church Online and of using technology and livestreaming with our worship. So far, we have been doing so with a temporary setup. The PCC had made a decision that we want to upgrade this into a permanent setup so that we can develop and improve even further what we have been doing with technology for

our worship.

There will be two screens installed in the chancel so that those who sit in the chancel can finally have access to what's on the screen. Two high resolution cameras will be installed on the edge of the balcony. There will be a microphone installed close to the ceiling which can record the music that is played inside the church building. And, finally, the analogue audio system will be upgraded into a digital audio system, which will provide better sound for those with hearing aids and for those who worship online.

The work will commence on Tuesday the 6<sup>th</sup> of July and will be completed by Thursday the 8<sup>th</sup> of July.

Please pray for this work, and for all those who are involved, that all may go smoothly and that we may achieve what we hope to achieve, which is reaching out to people even further and sharing the gospel with a wider community.

It would be very helpful if we could have a team of people who will be the operators for our Church Online. If you are interested in operating livestreaming for us, please do let me know.

## **Weddings**

Our congratulations and prayers to those who had their weddings at our church.

The 1<sup>st</sup> of June: Rob and Emily McLeod

The 12<sup>th</sup> of June: Mario and Alison Ryan

Emily is a granddaughter of Reg and June. Alison and Mario have been worshipping with us for the last couple of years with their two beautiful daughters, Jazmin and Shantel. May God bless all of them, their families and their marriage.

## **Future Pastoral Letters**

Some things were lost in the middle of the Pandemic and through the lockdowns, but there are some things that we gained because of the last 16 months. This Pastoral Letter is one of the gains. So many of our friends have told me (even today!) how much they appreciated and valued the letters they received. And it is truly a team effort. All those who kindly deliver the letters, all those who contribute to the letters, all those who support our mission and pray for us, make the pastoral letters special.

It is very much my hope that we don't lose it along with other things that we want to keep. The pastoral letter was born almost accidentally when we were suddenly all forced to be in what was effectively a house arrest. It reminded us of the importance of communication and of being in touch with each other. It showed us that we are indeed part of one community, of one family, of one God.

I have been discussing and discerning together with the leaders of the church on how we could move forward with it. We decided that we want to make the pastoral letter into a monthly Parish e-Newsletter which will also be available as a hard copy for those who don't have access to the internet. Bob is working with me, and with others, on the format and the organizing of this project. I am very much looking forward to talking to you through a new parish e-newsletter!

That is all that I have to share with you for now. It might feel that we are put back into the waiting room again as we hear the news of the delay of further relaxation of the rules. But I am confident that there must be a reason when God puts us back into a waiting room. He is always at work, and he has a great plan for us to which he wants to invite us to work with him. Perhaps he wants us to focus a little longer on recovering and regaining our strength, reflecting upon what has happened to us over the last 16-17 months and how we have travelled this far together with God, praying for the guidance and vision for the days and years ahead of us. As we enjoy the sunshine of this summer, perhaps that is what we can do. We will emerge from this crisis, and we will take this as an opportunity to build something new and fresh as God's people.

With love in Christ

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