

All Saints' Church

Cottenham with Rampton



Pastoral Letter #9

13th May 2020

Dear Church Family,

I remember when the global pandemic started, I tried to be as optimistic as possible. I thought we'd be out of church for a few weeks, would probably miss Easter but might be back by Pentecost. And then a Church of England briefing indicated that it might be September, and I started to plan in my mind a Back to Church Service for the start of the autumn term and also think about Harvest. And then last week the Bishops said that they were doubtful that we'd be back for Christmas, at which my heart sank. With every announcement, I'd start to hook my hope on a return and then be disappointed. This week, the government are suggesting we could return in July, which seems overly optimistic given what the Bishops are saying. What this might look like we simply don't know, but it's likely *not* to involve sharing communion or singing. It might just be 'open for private prayer'.

I came across an article in the week that spoke about the 'Stockdale Paradox', a term I hadn't heard before. An admiral in the US Navy, James Stockdale, survived 8 years as a POW in a North Vietnamese prison camp. When asked who of his fellow prisoners struggled to make it out alive, he replied, *'The optimists – the ones who thought they'd be out by Christmas/Easter/Thanksgiving, and saw every festival come and go. They died of a broken heart.'* How James Stockdale coped – now known as the Stockdale Paradox - was by developing the ability to hold two opposing but equally true things at once: The faith that we *will* prevail in the end; whilst confronting the sad reality of the current situation. I *do* believe that this virus will be beaten (but probably not just yet), and I also believe God to be the source of our love, creativity, resilience, kindness and humour that enables us to cope with our current reality. And I draw support from the Holy Spirit who, we learn from this Sunday's gospel reading, was sent to come alongside the disciples to provide an eternal source of strength on which to draw, when we just don't have what it takes on our own. Also, I have faith that God is already present in the future we keep pinning our hopes and fears to, so maybe it's about time I let go of them and simply trust that he has this in hand. I'd like to think this might help the other optimists among us too!

Whilst we wait for the time when we can meet together physically, online services will continue. I hope that those of you with Internet access are able to view them easily and feel that you are taking part. Please follow the steps in the last two Pastoral Letters if you're not too confident in finding your way to the right place on a Sunday morning.

Services and events happening this week are:

Fri 15th May at 3.30pm – Weekly Bible Study on 1 Corinthians led by Frances Horgan using Zoom. If you've downloaded Zoom and want to join, please let me know and I'll send you the link. Please note the change of time for this week only.

Sun 17th May – online service available on Facebook and YouTube from early on Sunday morning. Watch at whatever time is convenient to you.

Sun 17th May at 11am – coffee and chat after the service using Zoom. Do join us and catch up with one another.

Sun 17th May at 6pm – Evening Prayer using Zoom led this week by Cheryl Lowe. If you want to join, please let Cheryl (cheryl@cynewulf.co.uk) know, and she'll send you a link to the service. During May and June, we are exploring the meaning of The Lord's Prayer, one line at a time.

Thurs 21st May at 7pm – Ascension Day Service using Zoom. If you want to join, please let me know.

For your prayers, please could you remember the following:

- Those who are missing contact with loved ones, particularly those who are bereaved
- Those with long-term ill-health
- All those working in the NHS and care homes during the pandemic; all other key workers keeping vital services going
- For the government as they implement their strategy to bring us gently out of lockdown, and for those who are worried at the possible consequences of this.

If you are using the 'Prayer and Worship from Home' resource and saying Morning or Evening Prayer, these are the Lectionary (set) readings for the week ahead:

Sat 16 th May	Numbers 14: 26 to end; Luke 6: 12-26
Sun 17 th May	Acts 17: 22-31; John 14: 15-21
Mon 18 th May	Numbers 16: 1-35; Luke 6: 27-38
Tues 19 th May	Numbers 16: 36 to end; Luke 6: 39 to end
Wed 20 th May	Numbers 17: 1-11; Luke 7: 1-10
Thurs 21 th May Ascension Day	Acts 1: 1-11; Luke 24: 44 to end
Fri 22 th May	Numbers 20: 1-13: 7; Luke 7: 11-17

We are currently updating the Church Directory. If you are not presently in the directory, or your details have changed in any way, please let Matthew Unwin-Riches, Parish Administrator know (admin@allsaintscottenham.org.uk or 252298 on Wed mornings).

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

Best wishes, Lynda.

Rector of All Saints Cottenham with Rampton

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