

All Saints' Church

Cottenham with Rampton



Pastoral Letter #27

16th September 2020

Dear Church Family,

Thank you for your prayers whilst we were on holiday. We had a good break and enjoyed both the South Downs and the West Sussex coastline. We were very lucky to be blessed with some lovely sunny weather.

The level of change that many of us have faced in the last six months has been significant. Social distancing, face coverings and hand sanitising have all become normal. Home working, online meetings and education, together with the increased use of social media, have grown exponentially. Expressions like 'furloughed' and 'You're on mute!' are often on our lips. Getting a haircut, outings to the garden centre or the tip have caused a level of excitement unthinkable a year ago. Alongside these have been more distressing changes: bereavement, the effect of the pandemic on the economy, job losses, postponed weddings and other celebrations, loneliness and isolation.

Over the last month or so, things have seemed more positive. Churches were able to re-open for worship, children prepared to return to school, and the government sought to support the hospitality industry by subsidising meals in hotels and restaurants through its 'eat out to help out' scheme. It felt as if things were starting to return to normal, but always in the context of continuing uncertainty about the future.

This week, the 10.30am service resumes and we look forward to welcoming many of you back to church. The 8.30am service has been working successfully since the 2nd of August with face coverings, hand sanitising and social distancing in place. Every service has been well-attended and there have been no concerns about anyone's safety. If you have been shopping in supermarkets, attending appointments at the hospital, or visiting family, you will already be well used to the measures we need to take to reduce risk, and church is no exception. All of the measures currently in place for the 8.30am service will be applied to the 10.30am, with the church cleaned in-between. As choirs can sing (though congregations still cannot), Frances and the choir have been busy rehearsing for this week's service. I don't know about you, but I can't wait to hear them!

As there will be reduced numbers at the 10.30am (some are understandably still shielding), we do need people to come forward offering to help with welcoming people, reading the Bible passage and leading us in prayers of intercession. If you can help in any way (support can be provided with prayers), do speak to either me or Kit Kilgour ASAP. For those who cannot come to church in person, online services will continue.

The last six months have been difficult for many of us and may have raised all sorts of questions about faith. If you would like a 'Faith MOT' – the opportunity to talk through where you are with God – do please let me know and we can grab a coffee together. I have

been heartened by many of your stories during lockdown of renewed interest in reading your Bibles, and an increased awareness of the presence of God and of his peace, but I know that this won't have been the case for all of you. If you are struggling, please let either me, or someone else you trust, know, so that we can help.

This week we begin a new sermon series on the lectionary readings from Paul's letter to the Philippians. It's a great letter of hope. Despite being in prison (the most extreme form of lockdown), Paul is still sharing the good news of Jesus with those around him, and provides much encouragement to the church in Philippi who have supported him. He begins his letter with thanksgiving and prayer:

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

As Christians in Cottenham and Rampton in the 21st Century, we continue to be partners together in sharing the gospel with each other and those around us. Like Paul, I long for the time when we can ALL be together again but, until then, I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on Sunday. As the service will still be in progress at 11am, the Coffee and Chat over Zoom will be moved to a later time of **12 noon**. The evening service at 6pm will continue on Zoom for the time being.

Thank you to those who responded to the request for financial giving a few weeks ago. In line with Church of England guidance we are not taking up collections at services at the moment, but there is a basket by the door for the weekly envelopes and cash donations and a card reader if you'd like to give in this way. We also have some information packs for the Parish Giving Scheme.

Please be aware that Matt, our Parish Administrator, is now working Wednesdays only. If you need to contact him, please email him or ring the Parish Office between 9.30 and 2.30 on a Wednesday.

During September, I am rowing the equivalent of the English Channel (from the safety of my garage on a rowing machine) to raise money for the British Red Cross who continue to support refugees. If you wish to contribute, please head to the following webpage: <https://miles-for-refugees-2020.everydayhero.com/uk/lynda>

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,