

All Saints' Church

Cottenham with Rampton



Pastoral Letter #28

23rd September 2020

Dear Church Family,

On social media this week, I came across the notion of the 'Six Month Wall'. Typically, those working on long-term projects in disaster zones often experience a time of struggle or slump six months into their assignment, where it can be hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Six months ago this week, the country went into lockdown and it's been a bit of a rollercoaster journey since then. We've already learned how to shop, host meetings, and worship differently. We've found new, creative ways of connecting with each other and having fun. But as the days get shorter and colder, it can be harder to cope with the ongoing uncertainty and we need to be ready to innovate again. The advice to those who've hit a 'six month wall' is to carry on doing the things you are doing – work, cook, exercise – but just don't expect to be sparkingly happy or widely creative for a few weeks. If you can meet your commitments and be kind to your loved ones, then you'll be doing exceptionally well! And the wall will end in time. The other thing you can do is give yourself 'shore leave' – plan in mental and physical breaks by reading a good book which completely absorbs you, watch a TV programme you wouldn't ordinarily watch, go for a walk and enjoy the autumn colours, or something else equally restorative.

I think it's really helpful that we're looking at Paul's letter to the Philippians at the moment. Paul's letters from prison (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon) give us a portrait of a man facing huge difficulties and hardships but coming through with his faith and hope unscathed. That's not to say that he didn't have days of darkness, but you rather think that Paul probably followed his own advice when struggling with uncertainty, when he told the Thessalonians to:

Rejoice always

Pray without ceasing

Give thanks in all circumstances.

I try hard to count my blessings each day and to rejoice and give thanks for God's goodness. I also have a 'Favourite Stuff' tin in which I place every card or message of thanks so, when I feel discouraged, I can re-read them and be uplifted. I also, as you'd hope, pray – for my own family and their needs, but for all of you in these difficult times.

Over these next weeks, we have some good things to look forward to. On Saturday 3rd October, Alison Wedgbury will be licensed as a Lay Reader in the parish after her two-year training. This will be on Zoom. Do think of, and pray for her as she begins this new stage of ministry among us.

We also have Harvest Festivals coming up – in Rampton on Sunday 4th October at 6pm, and in Cottenham on Sunday 11th October at 10.30am. We're going to be collecting for the Foodbank, a much needed resource at the current time. A list of key items will be available shortly.

Also on Sunday 4th October after the 10.30am service there will be a brief Vestry Meeting and Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) to elect our Churchwardens, Deanery Synod Representatives and new PCC members. There are several vacancies on the PCC so if you're interested in joining, do please let me know. New members are always very welcome. It's a great way to serve the church and there are only six meetings a year.

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. I've reached the point where the white cliffs of Dover are firmly in view! If you wish to contribute, please head to the following webpage: <https://miles-for-refugees-2020.everydayhero.com/uk/lynda> I have almost reached my target.

It was lovely to see so many of you last week at both the 8.30am and 10.30am services, at Coffee and Chat over Zoom and at the evening service over Zoom at 6pm. Paul tells the Hebrews '*not to give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing*', but to '*encourage one another*'. Thank you for the encouragement you give me by coming together in person and online to continue to worship our Lord.

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,

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