

## All Saints' Church

Cottenham with Rampton



### Pastoral Letter #34

4<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Dear Church Family,

It seems inevitable that a second lockdown will be upon us on Thursday. It is going to be different from the first one. The days are getting colder and shorter. We are anxious for ourselves, for those we love, especially those who are vulnerable and elderly, and for our families. We know that this pandemic is having a devastating effect on our economy and on people's mental health. Thousands of people are dying and the NHS is being stretched to the limit in some areas. Although we are fortunate in South Cambridgeshire to have one of the lowest infection rates in the country, there is no doubt that we are in for a long haul over the winter.

But this second lockdown will also be different. There is much that we have learned from the first lockdown and there is much to celebrate and be proud of. In both of our villages there has been amazing community support, with volunteers willing to collect prescriptions and pick up shopping for those needing to be extra cautious. We also have many key workers living (and working) in the villages, those working for the NHS and in care homes, teaching staff, social workers, shop workers, delivery drivers, for whom we need to continue to be truly thankful.

As a church, we've continued to provide opportunities for people to worship online, even when services were able to resume in church in early August. We know that we have re-connected with many who had either lost touch with the church, or who can no longer come in person due to poor health. Everyone is welcome. This week, there is the usual weekly service available from early Sunday morning, but there is also a short Remembrance Service which we advise you to watch from 10.56am so that you are ready for the two-minute silence at 11am.

Whilst services in church must stop for the time being, I am grateful that the new guidelines allow both churches to remain open for individual prayer, but also for online services to be recorded from within our church buildings. Do please continue to use the church buildings for private prayer, ensuring you follow the guidelines on the table just inside the door.

Aware that Advent is just around the corner, I plan to produce some prayer resources that you can use at home. For those without the Internet, these will be printed and popped through your door. I am very grateful to Maggie and Graham Appleby who have faithfully delivered the Pastoral Letter to many of you over these last 8 months. If there's anyone else willing to help with this, please can you either let me or Matt know in the office. You can always combine it with a dog walk, or count the delivery as your daily exercise!

On All Saints' Day, the Archbishops wrote to the clergy of the Church of England. Within the letter, they are calling for us all to make this month of lockdown a month of prayer. Resources to help with this will be published later this week. They are also inviting those who are physically able, to fast in a way appropriate to each of us every Thursday, in the same way that we cheered for the NHS during the first lockdown. We are invited each Thursday to fast and pray for our nation, for its leaders, its health and essential services, and for all those that suffer. If you've not fasted before, a typical fast would be to refrain from food during the hours of daylight, and to use the time that you would normally spend to prepare and eat a meal, to pray instead. You may feel that there is little you can do to help others during the pandemic, but each and every one of us can pray.

On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November, Graham Appleby and the Resources Action Group had planned a churchyard clean-up morning at All Saints', Cottenham. As outdoor gatherings are now limited to just two people, volunteers are invited to come along when it's convenient to them and tackle a job from the list inside the porch. It's important that we continue the routine maintenance of both churches and their churchyards.

We don't know when this current lockdown will end, or whether it will need to be extended beyond the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December. We don't know whether we will be able to worship inside our Church buildings at Christmas. But what we *do* know is that we are utterly loved by our heavenly Father. I love the words from this Psalm of prayer by David:

*But let all who take refuge in you be glad;  
let them ever sing for joy.  
Spread your protection over them,  
that those who love your name  
may rejoice in you. (Psalm 5: 11)*

Let's carry on supporting one another through prayer, telephone and email contact. We are the body of Christ in these villages and our primary vocation as Christians is to pray and to serve one another. I thank God for each and every one of you.

Please can you pray specifically for the following who are unwell: John Easterling, Barry Herd, Janet Johnston, Phyll Greed and Bob Ward; and for the families of Andrew Johnson, Vivienne Borrow and Patrick Barnes who have recently died.

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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