

All Saints' Church

Cottenham with Rampton



Pastoral Letter #57

12th May 2021

Dear Church Family,

Last week I had the unusual experience of being interviewed by ITV for About Anglia. It was for a news item on the changes in the Marriage Act which came into force on Tuesday 4th May. They were planning to interview a couple getting married at the weekend, but they also wanted the view of a vicar. (Watch it on 'Catch-Up' if you want – Mon 10th at 6pm, about 15 mins in). For me, the changes are very welcome. For the first time, the names of mothers can be included on the Marriage Certificate, not just the names of fathers. I've had many an awkward conversation with a bride or groom when I've asked for the name of their father, and they've not wanted to give it as, for whatever reason, their father wasn't a part of their life growing up. Rather than leave it blank, the bride or groom has often asked why they cannot name their mother, the person who raised them, but this hasn't of course been possible until now. So, a very welcome change. The other change is that churches will no longer have Marriage Registers to be completed during the ceremony. This is replaced by a downloadable Marriage Document that everyone signs on the day, and which is then sent to the Register Office from where the Marriage Certificates are then produced. Whilst it's lovely to look through Marriage Registers, I'm relieved that I no longer have to complete them, as getting them right on the day (mistakes were costly!) was often the most stressful part of the day. Instead, we will have a 'Record of Marriages' book, in the same way that we have books in which to record Baptisms.

One thing that used to amuse me about the Marriage Registers and the Certificate was the box headed '*Condition*'. It's where you record (often in my study when form filling) whether the persons marrying are single, widowed or divorced, but occasionally someone would in fun reply with how they were feeling so, over the years, I've heard '*Tired*', '*Excited*', or '*Doing rather well, I think*' in response to that question! As I reflect on those occasions and people's interpretation of 'condition', I wonder how *you* are all doing, particularly those of you that I don't see very often because you're worshipping from home? How might you answer that question if asked? I wonder if you're feeling tired and worn out with the uncertainty of the last year? Or whether you're hopeful or even excited about the future, particularly as the restrictions ease? It's positive that the infection rate in the UK is very low at the moment, and we remain thankful for the successful roll-out of the vaccine, but we're also mindful that this isn't the case everywhere. The news coverage of the situation in India is very sobering, and many countries in the less developed world have yet to see any vaccines. Do please consider 'twinning' your vaccine if you're able – it's one way to help make a difference to those less fortunate than ourselves (see Unicef website).

On Thursday this week, it's Ascension Day and there will be a service of Holy Communion at All Saints', Cottenham at 7.30pm. All are welcome. Ascension Day is also the start of the

annual *Thy Kingdom Come* global prayer initiative, where we're encouraged to pray for 5 friends, family, neighbours or colleagues who've yet to know the love offered to them in Christ Jesus. This year, a Prayer Journal has been produced to help you pray during the 10 days between Ascension and Pentecost. Do pick one up from inside the church, either for your own use or to give to someone you know. There are plenty left.

Do remember that on Sunday 30th May we will be trialling a new way of being church for all ages – Worship in the Woods. Worshipping God in nature offers countless opportunities as God has much to say to us through his creation. For our first session we'll be thinking about God as a gardener and will get an overview of God's particular interest in trees. We'll meet at 3pm just inside the church gates and the session will be led by Hazel Davis, our ordinand from Ridley. There'll be stories, song, a quiz and prayer as well as much exploring of the churchyard trees. Do put a coat on if it's chilly on the day.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) is also on Sunday 30th May just after the 10.30am service. We still need someone to step forward as the second churchwarden. If this is a role you are thinking about, do please speak to either myself or one of the existing wardens ASAP. The role is well supported by myself and several Assistant Churchwardens. It's a very varied role, and there is nothing you cannot learn.

As folk have their second vaccines and the infection rate continues to decrease, I look forward to seeing more of you at church. It's encouraging to hear that the country is on target for the restrictions easing further next Monday. If you're feeling nervous about returning to church and want to talk through your concerns, please do get in touch. I'm very happy to chat on the phone or in your garden (or indoors from the 17th).

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,

Revd Lynda Davies

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