

**All Saints' Church
Cottenham with Rampton**



**Pastoral Letter #62
21st July 2021**

Dear Church Family,

As a child, I was useless at sport. I wasn't a fast runner, and lacked the strength to excel at most field sports. Hockey, played in the depth of winter, felt like torture, and I was always one of the last to be picked for ball games. Failing to appreciate the benefit of exercise, I never really understood why I couldn't just read a book in the library, an activity I'd have much preferred.

As an adult, I did embrace sport, taking up badminton at university and then enjoying watching Martyn play cricket. I'm also not bad at table-tennis having watched our son play for years. However, despite the lack of a personal sporting pedigree, when the summer of sport comes around, I'm glued to the TV with the rest of the nation. The balletic grace of Federer at Wimbledon, the heart-stopping goodness of the England Euro 2020 squad (even when they lose on penalties), the sheer overload of the Olympics – there's something so right about it all.

As a sporting luddite, what draws me in? What glimpses of heaven do I get from the arena?

Maybe it's the way sport lets us play with the physics God created. When Novak Djokovic, skidding madly sideways, hits a tennis ball with just the right speed and spin to drop it onto the tramline, utterly foxing his opponent, you go: 'WOW!' It's beautiful – because it's God's perfectly-balanced physical machine whirring in harmony. Likewise, I cannot tear my gaze away from the carefully choreographed routines of the world's best gymnasts. The perfection they achieve is awe-inspiring.

Or maybe it's the way sport creates community. The news captured many gatherings, in pub gardens and the like, of folk coming together to support the national football team, where, after 16 months of isolation strangers became friends, tables were pushed together, and joy was unconfined. Even the final defeat brought with it a sense of corporate mourning, as did the national condemnation of racist abuse afterwards.

I don't need telling that football communities are a mixed bag (I used to live near the Crystal Palace ground in the late 70s when football hooliganism was at its height). But in that momentary unity, there's a glimpse of a heavenly society free of division.

And that community goes deeper at the Olympics. Where better to see 'every nation, tribe, people, and language' joined in peaceful celebration – except perhaps the church?

At its best, sport reflects the glory of God and reminds us of our common identity as his children. As we watch from the safety of the sofa this summer, may that reminder stay with us – and may we carry it with us wherever God calls us, living in a way which points others to Christ in turn.

It's been lovely to see so many of you return to church over these last few months. Please be reassured that we will continue to take your safety very seriously. The Church of England updated its Coronavirus Guidance on Monday following the government's lifting of most of the restrictions. Like the stance taken by government, the national church expects churches to decide for themselves how best to manage the risk to ourselves and others, recognising that we are many

members within one body that are called to be responsible to and for one another, respecting the more vulnerable whose suffering is our suffering.

Although it is no longer a legal requirement to wear a face covering, the government expects and encourages people to wear face coverings in crowded and enclosed settings to protect themselves and others. The Church of England guidance suggests that future use of face coverings will depend on the size of the building and the numbers of those present. The PCC met last week to consider the changes and agreed that we would continue to ask people to wear a face covering as they enter and leave the church for a service, but can remove them once they are seated. As singing is known to increase the risk of passing on Coronavirus, we are asking people to wear a face covering whilst singing. We will continue to sing the last hymn outdoors, weather permitting. As we're blessed with a large building, we'll continue to set the chair groupings out at safe distances from one another. Obviously, our risk assessment and resulting practice will change as the risk changes in the coming months.

If you haven't yet returned to church or feel anxious about the relaxing of restrictions, do please speak with me. We want to ensure that everyone feels safe and comfortable to worship. The online service – *'The Sunday Sermon'* – will continue for the time being. It's available on the church website – www.allsaintscottenham.org.uk or on the church Facebook page.

We have the church Afternoon Tea coming up on Sunday 8th August from 3pm in the Rectory Garden. We're praying for good weather and a good opportunity to catch up with each other in the safety of the outdoors. If you can help in any way – setting out chairs and tables, making and/or serving tea, tidying up afterwards – please let Sue Hooks (250560) know ASAP.

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

Rector@allsaintscottenham.org.uk

01954 583651