

**All Saints' Church
Cottenham with Rampton**



**Pastoral Letter #66
6th October 2021**

Dear Church Family,

I do hope that you are all well. I thought that I would use this letter to let folk know how things are going in the church.

At the meeting of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) last month, I reported on some useful statistics which tell us that 95% of those who are physically able to come to church and were regular attenders at church prior to the first lockdown have now returned. That's an amazing statistic when many churches have lost up to a third of their church membership, so thank you. Furthermore, we've had a number of new people join us over the last six months – it seems that there's a new person every week! Thank you for the welcome you have given them.

The other bit of good news is that five people have asked to be baptised and/or confirmed at the service on Sunday 7th November at 5pm. At a time when no other church in the Deanery has put forward anyone for confirmation, this is great news and a huge encouragement. It's wonderful to see both the church growing in number and people growing in faith.

However – there's always a 'however' – whilst there are about 100 people regularly attending, you will notice that there aren't 100 in church every week. At the moment, we are averaging 15 at the 8.30am service and about 50 adults and children at the 10.30am. That's roughly two-thirds of the church family each week. Research tells us that 'irregular' has become the new 'regular' but wouldn't it be wonderful if more of the 100 of us who come regularly came just that bit more regularly?

St Paul, writing in his letter to Hebrews (10:25) addresses the problem (that was even around then!) by saying, *'Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.'* I couldn't agree more. You may recall that immediately prior to lockdown in March 2020 I wrote an article for the Spring Church Magazine. I didn't know at the time that Covid-19 and lockdown was just around the corner but the article was about the importance of us as Christians meeting together. I wrote that I'd read an article that listed seven reasons why it's important for us to attend church regularly.

The first is that the local church was God's plan in the New Testament. From the founding of the first local church in Jerusalem to the growth of new congregations across the Roman Empire, the New Testament is clear – God wanted his people gathering regularly and faithfully. The second is that the Bible speaks clearly about the priority of local congregations. If you read the New Testament from Acts to Revelation, you will see that a gathered church wasn't just one important factor for Christians, it was one of the *highest* priorities. After the ascension of Jesus, the local church was truly the 'body of Christ.' Thirdly, a unified church can stand strong in a culture that is increasingly turning away from faith. But, we can't be a unified church unless we're persistently gathered together. Do you remember how the early church in Jerusalem reached a culture opposed to God? The outside world saw the unity and joy of the church and wanted to know more about this Jesus they worshipped. We read in Acts 2: 47 that they were *'praising God and enjoying*

the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. The fourth reason is that the world looks at our priorities and evaluates what we deem as important. It follows then that we can't expect the community we serve to get excited about our church if the members of the community see it to be a low priority among church members. Fifthly, accountability takes place in the local church. When we gather together worshipping with others, we are holding each other up and accountable. We need people holding us accountable in love and looking after us. The sixth reason is that discipleship takes place in the local church. We become more like Christ as we gather and worship together, when we belong to a small group, when we listen to the Word preached each week, as we do ministry and evangelism through the local church together. And, lastly, God gives us great joy when we serve others through the local church, as we put others before ourselves, when we don't focus on our own preferences and desires.

I'm really excited at what God is doing at All Saints Cottenham with Rampton – for the many who have returned, the new folk who have joined us, the many new young families who have come to Little Saints since it was re-launched last month, and for the commitment to faith that several will be making in November as they are baptised and/or confirmed. But, wouldn't it be amazing if more of us joined together on a Sunday morning, to worship together and to support and encourage one another? How incredible would it be if everyone connected with the church in any way came to the Back to Church Service on Sunday 31st October at 10.30am? If the Church was full?

I know that people have many demands on their time, from visiting family living away from Cottenham and Rampton, supporting children with extra-curricular activities at the weekend, caring for older relatives, but it's worth each of us gently asking ourselves the question: Am I prioritising church on a Sunday? Is there more I could do to ensure I'm there, growing in faith and supporting my brothers and sisters in Christ? If there is anything Marie and I can do to help you come more regularly, please do let me know. Please don't hesitate to ring, email or chat to me.

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