



# Friday Fellowship News No 7 15 May 2020

## HOW LONG, O LORD?

I WONDER how many of us, perhaps in the still, small hours of the morning, have found themselves asking that age old question, voiced by the psalmist, and the prophet Habakkuk: **'How long, O Lord? How long?'**

Sometimes time seems to standstill and the purpose of God to lie idle. Nothing seems to be happening any time soon and we become impatient for action, anything to break the deadlock. Yet we wait in vain, and the days pass without any resolve. How hard it is to live with ambiguity, with not knowing, with things up in the air. We long for resolve, for clarity.



I guess after seven or eight weeks in lockdown we are all anxious for things to start moving again – even after the small measures announced this week.

For many, their patience has worn thin. For others, maybe their self-control has reached its limit. It is a dangerous time. Unwise, pre-emptive action could be costly. But the pressure is building inside us.

As we wrestle with the question 'How long?', the book of Habakkuk might be a good starting point, and I am reminded of a wonderful little book written by Mags Duggan that is based on the prophet's words and her

own wrestling with God in the midst of suffering - *'God among the ruins'*.

The book of Habakkuk is only three chapters long, but maybe in this time of lockdown, a delve into one short book of the Old Testament might be a unique, yet rewarding thing to do?

Resources I circulated last Friday with the FFN offer a huge range of ideas to help us all use this time wisely in developing our inner, spiritual life. If you have taken up one of the ideas/resources I sent, it would be lovely to hear how you've got on. Do drop me an email!

## CHURCH RE-OPENING?

AS you will have heard from the Prime Minister last Sunday, it may be possible for churches to be open for some kind of public worship in Phase Three, on or after July 4, IF the conditions are right.

The CofE nationally has senior advisers working with a new Government group to create the official Guidance which will be sent out nearer the time to help local churches. The PCC, through its Standing Committee, has already given serious thought as to how we might, in due course, be able to open St Denys again for worship – keeping social distancing at all times. And this week, I have asked Churchwarden Nigel Archer to chair a new Task Group which will put forward careful proposals to the PCC, once we know what the official Government and CofE advice is, and localised it.



I have also invited Liz Ward, our Safeguarding Officer, Sue Penman, Treasurer, Maz Galley, Pastoral Co-ordinator, and Steve Upton, to assist Nigel and myself on that TG. Each brings personal and career experience which we feel will help.

At this stage, it would not be helpful to share possible options/ideas coming up, but it is worth me saying a few things in principle:

- a) Whilst we want to reopen as soon as possible, the safety of all worshippers, and those on duty (sides people, duty warden and vicar) is paramount.
- b) Whatever we do internally will require us being able to keep 2-meters from each other at all times (except family household groups). By nature of their size, that almost certainly means St George Hatford, and All Saints Goosey will **not** be able to host services until we no longer need to social distance (2m). BCP services would need to be held in the larger, St Denys church.
- c) Whatever safeguards we put in place, each member of the congregation will need to make their own carefully considered decision as to when to return to church. This will possibly depend on any Government age-related advice and, of course, your own health generally. When in any doubt, your GP will need consulting.
- d) We will do all we can, from the start, to try to include everyone in worship. That may mean recording people from home reading the Bible readings, or leading prayers – to be played out in the church service and, recording the live service in church and making it available on our church's Facebook page and, via our YouTube channel, so you can view from home.
- e) We may also need to adjust service patterns and times slightly during this un-usual period to enable us to include as many people as possible in a variety of service types and, to ensure we can 'deep clean' the church surfaces and ventilate well between services. Temporary adjustments will only be taken as part of trying to be as safe as possible.
- f) As part of the PCCs decision-making process, we are likely to survey church members as to whether, and/or when they would feel able to come back to a service, given the safety measures we shall outline in due course. This will include a video of what we shall be providing in church for when people arrive for a service.

As I say, the TG will be working very carefully on these issues in the coming weeks/months under Nigel's chairmanship, but I thought it might help you to understand our thought patterns at this stage.

## THY KINGDOM COME 2020



LOOK up the great resources for this year's TKC Prayer initiative [www. https://www.thykingdomcome.global/](https://www.thykingdomcome.global/)

### SUNDAY READINGS & MESSAGE

THE Bible Readings for this Sunday are Acts 17:22-31 and John 14.15-21. I will post a brief video with some thoughts on the John reading on the St Denys Church Facebook Page, and on our YouTube Channel – search in YouTube for **St Denys Church Stanford**.

### ST DENYS CHRISTIAN BOOK CLUB?

THE idea is that I would suggest a few books and those who want to, can order the book and then we'd set a start date. Each week, we'd all read a chapter and then take part in a 30-40 minute (max) **Zoom Book Club** to share our thoughts on the chapter, and its application. The Zoom call would be during the daytime. Given for those over 70, it may not be possible to attend church for sometime, this is another way of re-charging our spiritual batteries from home. If interested, do drop me an email: [vicar@stdenys.org](mailto:vicar@stdenys.org)

### HUGE THANK YOU!

SINCERE thanks to all of you who have already converted your cash collections to Standing Orders. If you've not responded yet to your personalised letter, please respond asap to Sue Penman, using the Response Slip and sae provided - this would greatly help the PCC.

The PCC met this week, and agreed a revised 2020 Budget. In 2020, we aim to pay 9/12ths of Parish Share to the diocese, and should public worship return and some planned fundraising initiatives bear fruit, we'd hope to increase our share to near 100% if at all possible.

### VICAR HOLIDAY DAYS

Just to say that I will be taking a few days off 'holiday' from 22 May (our Wedding Anniversary – 21 Years) to Thursday 28 May inclusive. Do contact the wardens during this time if needed.

With my love and prayers  
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