

Rector's Letter - Rev'd Jeremy Trew - October 2021

Dear Friends,

I've just got back from taking my first School assembly in front of a room full of children since March last year. What a relief! Although you would need to ask the children if they shared this sentiment. Over the last eighteen months I have done Zoom assemblies, recorded videos to be shared, even prepared materials for teachers to use with their own classes; or at least, whatever was left of them. And, I have missed that immediate interaction with young people with fresh minds. They really do ask the best questions and aren't easily fobbed off with a half-baked answer. I enjoy that a great deal and have missed it enormously.



If you are reading this then the chances are that you feel some connection with the local Church, and therefore, that you have missed some of the activities and fellowship of the Church because of limitations imposed through Covid. Thank you for those of you who filled in the survey and answered questions regarding this. Responses have been collated and are to be discussed by the PCC. This is the beginnings of my own response.

These last eighteen months have been a difficult and challenging time for most. As with all other membership-based organisations, we have not been able to meet freely. As a faith-based organisation, we have not been able to enjoy the fellowship that not only supports us but that our Lord requires of us; to not give up meeting together and to continue in the breaking of bread. We have done our best. And, as someone arriving mid-pandemic (somewhat exhausted from providing for my previous parishes), I would like to thank all who have worked so hard to make possible what provision was offered and to ensure our gradual return has been safe. This has required an enormous amount of work by a small group of people. I recognise that their provision did not offer all that some wanted, and I am sure that occasionally things, and worse, people, have been overlooked. This was through no lack of effort. If you feel that you were not well provided for or that you were forgotten, please accept my apologies. In the family of the Church, it is incumbent upon us all to watch out for each other and to raise our hands if we suspect someone has fallen through the cracks. It is all too easy for that to happen in a large congregation at the best of times.

The immediate threat of Covid is receding, but its impact and consequences will be with us for years. For the Church locally the challenge of providing ministry is exacerbated by several vacancies across the Deanery placing greater demands on clergy, particularly those who are retired (a designation that seems laughable at times). Thankfully we enjoy a great range of skilled and generous people who bring so much more to what we offer. As the Diocese assesses the impact of Covid and formulates its response I suspect that we will need to look to the roots of our faith again. We would do well to recall that through baptism we each receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the call to be ministers of God's Church. For some, that ministry is very public and distinct, such as my own. For most, it is more subtle, but none-the-less significant. The work of God's Church today seems to be moving from an emphasis on people coming to our gatherings, to the Church encountering and ministering to that part of the world God has called us to serve. Our Sunday worship changes back to be the refreshing and encouraging we need for this service, rather than an end in itself. This may well be challenging, but I think it is also exciting and filled with potential. I hope that you

will join with the rest of St Mary's, the Team, Deanery and Diocese as we journey on our pilgrim way.

Yours

Jeremy

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