7.7.20

It was really good to see over 35 people in church on Sunday 5th July, and an equal number on Zoom too – what a gift to be able to share worship from different locations.

I am aware that the sound quality on Zoom was not brilliant. It is better on the recording in our website, and we are working on all that. For a first attempt I think it was fabulous though and I’d like to thank Dave Sopp for his hard work in making our technological advances possible. Well done too, to everyone one who has learned to use technology to stay in touch and thank you to everyone who was physically in church – the social distancing and other measures seemed to work well.

Being in church itself was both a joy and a spiritual challenge – it is not as it was before lock down, and it won’t be for some time. Do be aware that you may not feel as you thought you would either in church or at home and be prepared both for your own emotions to do odd things – and for God to speak to you in ways that you might not have been expecting! Please do contact myself, or Terrie or Phyl if you’d like to talk these feelings over at all (please bear in mind that, while Phyl is now officially our curate she is also in full time paid employment, and does not have the hours that Nicola had. We will confirm her working times in due course).

**A few things that have come to light for future weeks in church:**

* You may wish to bring your own flatish cushion as we have had to roll up the pew runners and some folk found the pews hard on Sunday!
* With time we will offer a children’s activity so that families can feel fully included.
* As we use every other pew, we can get 3 single people socially distanced in long pews and two in short ones. Please think about others who will come in after you as you take your seat. Clearly families / couples can sit together. If we then run out of space the duty warden will add plastic chairs, spaced.
* We are noting the names of all at each service and will make individual contact if anyone who was in church feels unwell or tests positive for Covid 19.
* The jury is still out on singing but for now we just can’t sing – frustrating, but is how it is! On Zoom, of course, you can sing your heart out - muted!
* You may find that you do different things on different weeks – don’t worry about that.

**A reminder that our next study series starts this Thursday at 7.30 pm on Zoom:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83247791779?pwd=NDErZXlvUEVQVkJSS1B6MlRqcmJQdz09>

Meeting ID: 832 4779 1779
Password: 495015

I do hope that many of you will be able to join that as we reflect on the impact of coronavirus on our church life. The booklet we will use is here:

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/coronavirus-covid-19-2/emerging-from-coronavirus/>

You may also like to listen to Bishop Steven’s podcast which introduces it. You will find it at the same link above.

**And so, to this coming Sunday when we will have a Eucharist in church for the first time in 3 months.**

I will send with the weekly sheet at the end of the week, an order of service. This will be generic for the next few weeks and so have mainly the congregational parts in – allowing flexibility for the collect, Eucharistic prayer etc. These may, with some hymns, be in the weekly sheet. You will need to print your own copy of the order of service (or download it to your device) and bring it weekly. There will be a very few hard copies of the service available in church, but no hard copies of the weekly sheet.

The password for the church’s public internet connection is on the board as you come into church, in case your device needs it:

Be aware of:

* We will share the Peace by a (respectful) wave which I hope can include those online. Please do not share it physically with family members, that is unfair to single people.
* Only the president will touch the silverware and hosts (except when a second ciborium is used – then the minister distributing will be the only person who has handled the hosts in it).
* Communion will be the host only. The president will consecrate and consume wine also to comply with canon law.
* The ciboria will be COVERED at the consecration to ensure no possible infection.
* At the breaking of the host only the wafer that the president will receive is uncovered.
* The president will say the words of invitation, and say to all of us TOGETHER ‘the body of Christ, broken for you’ and we ALL say ‘Amen’ TOGETHER.
* The host will then be distributed IN SILENCE
* Please remain in your place, the president (and possibly another minister) will bring the host to you. Feel free to stand or sit as you feel most appropriate. Please sit once you have received.
* We are instructed to ‘drop’ the host into your hands so that there is no physical contact. You are welcome to gel your hands before receiving.
* Do not feel that you must receive. If you would prefer a blessing, please cross hands over your chest and we will offer a silent blessing.
* The president (and other minister) will wear a visor to distribute the hosts.
* I am really not comfortable reserving any surplus consecrated hosts because they have been exposed to the air. If we need to take the sacrament to anyone at home *in extremis* I will consecrate separately.

That all sounds so clinical, but please do not be put off. You can still make a spiritual communion, if you prefer to do so. Be aware too the Jesus comes to us regardless of the constraints that we place.

What I do want to warn against (very strongly) is the practice of having your own bread and wine in front of you at home during online worship. This is not sacramental and not appropriate at all.

May God continue to bless and protect us all as we move through this fraught time of unlocking and living with a ‘new normal’. Our lives change, but God does not. He is constant and our rock at all times.

With every blessing

Sally