

**Sunday 12 July 2020**

## **Into the Unknown**

Dear All

I wonder what your experience has been this last week as restrictions begin to lift and we come out of lockdown? I have to say that, as I venture out, I find the world very strange. With marked queueing spaces, Perspex screens, ubiquitous handwash and social distancing, I wonder if this 'new normal' will ever feel truly 'normal'? It is amazing how quickly we as humans adapt to new circumstances and of course all these precautions are necessary in order to stop the virus spreading further. However, I hope that whatever 'new normal' eventually looks like, it won't just be a case of the 'old normal' with increased hygiene! Instead, I hope we will take the opportunity to consider some of the deeper changes we have been discussing over recent weeks – greater togetherness and awareness of racism; valuing life over financial gain and looking to end poverty; creative and imaginative thinking about how to build a better world where the needs of all can be met within the resources of the planet.

And what about the 'new normal' at Church? Church buildings are now being opened for worship as well as private prayer but, given the size of our building, that is a real challenge for us at St Mary's. We cannot simply go back to the 'old normal' but with social distancing – the numbers would be too limited. I hope therefore that, as we remain online, we can turn this into a positive opportunity to think deeply about what the Church is and how we can express our love for God, for one another and for our community without gathering in a building as we once used to. On Sunday we will begin a new sermon series 'What is the Church?' looking at biblical imagery and considering how we might live out our calling to be the Church of Christ in these particular times and circumstances. This is an unknown journey for us all, I certainly don't know the answers! However, I find comfort in knowing there is good biblical precedence in stepping into the unknown - and we believe and trust in God's upholding love and guidance as we find our way forwards together.

### **Sunday's Services: YouTube ...**

And so, we begin our new series on the Church this week with the theme 'Called to Follow' and the image of being the People of God. The service will include Holy Communion and, as at Easter and Pentecost, I will take bread and wine on behalf of us all and invite you to take part spiritually, through prayer. This is partly in response to the survey which currently indicates a preference for monthly communion and also because it fits well with the start of our new sermon series this month. An email with the link for this Sunday will be sent as usual on Friday. As ever, please do get in touch if you have difficulty accessing the service and we will do all we can to help.

### **... and Zoom**

This week we will also be trialling an additional service of Evening Worship on Zoom. This will be at 6pm and last around half an hour. It will include prayer, Bible readings and the opportunity to discuss together. At the end of the service there will be time to stay on and chat for a while for those who would like to. For online security, details are not being shared publicly but will be sent to regular members in a separate email. Please contact Adele if you would like to know more.

### **Opening for Private Prayer**

It was lovely to welcome a few more people for private prayer last week in small numbers that felt we could operate safely. We will be opening the Church building and woodland again this Sunday from 3-4pm and hope to give priority to those who have not been before. Therefore, can I ask that if you came last week and would like to come again, please come prepared to use the woodland in the first instance.

### **Worship Survey**

Thank you to those who responded to the survey. Overall, there was a very positive response to the online services we have been able to do and I'm grateful for your encouragement and support. I still need to phone a few more people and will then discuss the responses with standing committee before reporting back to you all in my letter next week. Unfortunately, the free version of survey monkey only allows 40 responses, so a few went unseen (those after 3pm on Thursday 2 July). Many apologies to those I missed – do email me if there's something you want to say!

### **And finally: An Appeal for The Bridge**

We received an email this week via Loughborough Churches Partnership asking for financial support for The Bridge in Loughborough. Many of you will know of the support they offer to those in need. Please consider if you are able to help:

#### **A storm is coming...**

Families in Loughborough who are currently struggling financially may soon be hit by further financial problems. Feeding children during the summer holidays will be an added expense as schools are closed. As the furlough scheme starts to unwind, more and more people will find that they have no job to return to and the number of those in need will rise. The rules for the Universal Credit Scheme are starting to tighten once more. As lockdown rules are relaxed other forms of government support will also diminish.

The Bridge, a charity based in Loughborough, is working hard to support those in need. At the moment they are supporting the provision of more than 600 food parcels each week. This number will grow. They also provide a range of other support services.

The Bridge needs our help. Times are hard for many. Are you able to donate a little to help those in need in Loughborough?

You can donate via [The Bridge website](#) or send a letter entitled "Food Poverty" with a cheque made payable to "The Bridge (East Midlands)" to The Bridge, 38 Leicester Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 2AG.

Alternatively using the following information, you can make a one-off BACS payment.

Name - The Bridge (East Midlands)

Sort Code - 40-52-40

Account Number - 00084149

Reference - Food Poverty

Thank you.

Terry Spicer

Catholic Social Action Group, St Mary's Catholic Church

*"Thus says the Lord..... Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." Isaiah 43:1b*

With love in Christ

Adele