

The Parish of Christchurch



The Priory Church of the Holy Trinity, Christchurch
St George, Jumpers • St John at Purewell

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for 19th July 2020

Dear Friends,

Each week that passes seems to bring with it something new, strange and, for some at least, uncomfortable. This week it has been the news that face-coverings are to become compulsory as a matter of law when we visit shops. For some, this is a sensible and welcome development and gives confidence when leaving home; for others, it adds to the feelings of unease, vulnerability and uncertainty and makes it harder to leave home. At the time of writing this letter, we are considering what this new rule means for us in our church buildings and the gift shop and café, and we are (you guessed it) waiting for further guidance from the government and the Church of England.

In the Priory Church, we have now held two celebrations of the Eucharist (on Wednesdays in the Lady Chapel at 11.00 am) and these too have been different; with seating spaced apart, no singing, silence at the point of distribution of the sacrament, and with the priest wearing gloves and a protective visor. We don't know exactly how the first disciples of Jesus celebrated what we now know as the Eucharist in the years immediately following his death and resurrection, but I think we can safely say that it was not like this! And yet the Eucharist remains what it has always been: a gathering, thanksgiving, offering and receiving, a sending out.

This Sunday (19th July) we will, God willing, celebrate our first Sunday Eucharist in the Priory Church with a congregation since 23rd March. Details of this were set out in the weekly letter for 5th July, which can be found on the parish website. **Please note the new start time of 10.00 am** and please allow some extra time to get seated. Yet this is by no means a return to the way things were before the closure of our churches: the way we celebrate will be different and two of our three churches remain closed. Importantly, we aim to continue to provide this Sunday service online as well as having a congregation in the Priory because it is clear that many people are not able or not yet ready to attend a service in the church building.

As Fr Richard stressed in this letter last week, no-one should feel under any pressure or sense of obligation to attend the services in the church building and should only come when they can do so with joy and without fearfulness (and obviously should not come if they are experiencing symptoms of the Covid-19 virus). If anyone would like to speak to one of the clergy about this, we would be only too happy to do so. Yet notwithstanding the strangeness and possible discomfort of these necessary arrangements and precautions, we will still gather (physically or online), give thanks (in spoken words if not in song), offer and receive (even if quietly and without touching) and be sent out (carefully).

N.B. If you are coming to the Priory on Sunday morning, please bring with you a slip of paper on which you have written your name and address. This is to help with Track and Trace.

As Fr. Richard also mentioned in this letter last week, we have the great joy of a confirmation service coming up on 2nd August, when we expect that the Bishop of Southampton (Rt. Rev'd. Debbie Sellin) will come to the Priory to confirm 7 candidates from our own community at our Eucharist at 10.00 am. They are:

- Rodger Hawkyard
- Sandra Folgate
- Nikita Folgate
- Robert Crake
- Vicky Semple-Khan (candidate for reception into the Church of England)
- Louise Naylor
- Simeon Evans

Please pray for each of them as this day approaches and they make a commitment to live as disciples of Jesus.

Lastly, as we begin to resume some of the activities that have been suspended, both in our life together as church and more generally, please keep an eye out for those who remain absent. There is a risk that we start to assume that all is back to normal and all is well and that we fail to notice that someone is still in isolation or stuck away from home or is housebound for some other reason. If our life together as a Christian community means anything at all, it is that we look out for those who might otherwise go un-noticed. Jesus' command that we should love one another as he loved us (John 15.12) is always of central importance, but it seems even more so now. If you do become aware that you have not seen someone you might expect to have seen out and about, please let one of the clergy know so that we can decide how best to try to make sure that person is all right.

With my love and prayers for the week ahead,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Evans', with a horizontal line underneath.

Reverend Jonathan Evans