

The Parish of Christchurch



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

Sunday 26th July 2020 – Seventh Sunday after Trinity

Dear Friends,

I hope this finds you well and in good heart. Since last I wrote to you three weeks ago much has happened. Last Sunday morning, July 19, saw the first Sunday morning service in the Priory for four months, a 10.00am Eucharist; this was a very special occasion. There have now been three midweek Eucharists at 11.00am on Wednesdays, which have been well-attended. Evening Prayer has taken place daily at 5.00pm in the Great Quire.

Like many of you, I am still trying to process all this. It has been wonderful to see some of you in person, albeit at a social distance, after so many weeks, and to sense that the spirit of worship has not left the Priory. That is because it has not left us: we bring with us a sense of the presence of God, and of our expectation of his presence, when we come together to worship him. So it has been, on Wednesdays, at Evening Prayer, and last Sunday morning.

That said, I want to endorse what Fr Richard wrote two weeks ago to any of you who don't feel ready to come to church: "there is no hurry". Each of us must make that decision for ourselves. If you have access to the internet, a recording of our Sunday morning service will appear on the parish website and on YouTube later in the day, so you can will be able to participate in that way.

On another level, I cannot get away from the perception that when we emerge at the other end of the pandemic – whenever that may be – we shall find that our ministry, our mission, our priorities, even our vocation from God, are no longer the same. Archbishop Rowan Williams famously (and rightly) said that 'Mission is seeing what God is doing, and joining in.' God give us eyes to see, ears to hear, a heart to perceive and the will to join in what God is doing in us and around us and through us.

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One of the many positive things about last Sunday morning was to see that all the careful preparations to ensure your safety working out in practice. I want to thank those of you who came to that service for following the guidance so well. Inevitably, we learned a lot from last Sunday's service and so the guidance in this Sunday's service booklet has been tweaked accordingly.

Recently, the question I and my colleagues have been asked more than any other has been about whether we should use face coverings in church. The clearest answer comes from the Church of England's website, which on Tuesday 21st posted a new page about face coverings, which has this as its opening point:

I. Q. Should I wear a face covering in a church building?

A. Face coverings are currently mandatory on public transport and will be mandatory in shops and in supermarkets from 24 July 2020. People are also encouraged to wear face coverings in enclosed public spaces where there are people they do not normally meet, such as a place of worship. **We strongly advise that face coverings should be worn by all those attending a place of worship** [*my bold*], including ministers, worshippers, staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors, where there may be other people present; remembering that they are mainly intended to protect other people, not the wearer, from coronavirus COVID-19 and that they are not a replacement for physical distancing and regular hand washing.

With that in mind, therefore, here is a gentle reminder of some important information to bear in mind as you come to one of our services:

- It is crucial that we maintain social distancing at all times, including as we enter and leave the church. For public worship this is still 2 metres.
- If you are coming to the Priory for any service, please bring with you a slip of paper on which you have written your name and contact details. This is to help with Track and Trace. There will be a box where you can leave the slip of paper as you enter via the North Porch.
- We recommend that you wear a face-covering, unless you have a medical reason for not doing so.
- Please use the hand sanitizer at the West End
- At the West End there will be two large salvers, into which you can put your offerings and collection envelopes. There will not be a plate collection during the service.
- Please do not stop for a chat on the way in, whether with the sidesmen or a friend; that will almost certainly breach social distancing.
- Please observe the one-way system at all times.
- There a seating plan. If you are coming on your own, whenever possible please sit in one of the single seats. Please don't expect to be able to sit in your customary seat, or mind if you can't. Please don't change seats.
- During the service we are encouraged to make our responses quietly. This is to avoid the spread of aerosol droplets.
- For the same reason, please resist the temptation to hold conversations with one another once you are in your seat. There will be an opportunity to meet after the service, should you wish.

After each service we are cleaning all the seats where people have sat during a service. We need a new team of people willing to help clean seats after the Sunday Eucharist: it will only take two people about fifteen minutes. We provide the cleaning materials. Please contact Roger if you would like to help.

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One-Off-Ask Thank you to everyone who has already made a donation in response to my 'One-Off-Ask' appeal last week. So far you have raised just over £31,000, including Gift Aid, which will go a long way to mitigating the impact of the loss of income in the parish since lockdown began. As this weekend sees the formal end of this 'One-Off-Ask' appeal, may I encourage anyone who has not yet made a donation to consider doing so now. Anything you can give will help sustain our ministry and mission in these testing days. Thank you for your generosity.

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The easing of lockdown means that Simon Earl has been able to organise a series of summer lunchtime concerts, starting on **Saturday August 8th at 12.30pm**. Simon will give the first concert on the organ.

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Finally, please keep praying. As we went into lockdown, we were in the middle of an important series of sermons and small group sessions on prayer. Looking back, it seems almost prophetic. Thank you for your prayers, encouragement and support throughout the past four months. Please keep praying: for one another, for the leadership team, and for a clear sense of God's purposes for us in the coming months and years. God bless you all,

Charles Stewart