



The Parish of Christchurch

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

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for 23rd August 2020

Dear Friends,

Over the last few weeks and months, a fairly common refrain among members of the Church of England, said in relation to our life together as a church community, has been that 'it's just not the same', or 'I can't find the meaning in it', or 'it doesn't feel right'. Sometimes, this has been about being together online rather than in person, whether for worship, fellowship or in meetings. Sometimes it has been about having to maintain physical distance, or wear a face covering, or not sing. Sometimes it has been about where we sit and where we walk, or how we share holy communion.

There's no doubting that things are very different and for many of us very uncomfortable. But rather than offer some false assurance that things will soon all be back to the way they used to be, I'd like to urge us to think together about what we think does matter, and why; where and how we do find the meaning in what we do as a Christian community. There is a risk, it seems to me, that the changes that we are required to make in order to keep ourselves and others as safe as we can from the risks posed by the Coronavirus could cause us to become very self-centred in our approach to our common life, and that could be more dangerous than the virus itself.

The Church exists as a community of believers; together we make up the body of Christ. We are called to participate in a shared life of offering ourselves to God and one another in service and praise. It follows that we do not find the meaning of our Christian life in ourselves alone, but in the shared life of the whole Christian community. The meaning, the purpose, the point of it all is not in how it feels to me, but in our joint service of God and our joint offering of praise to God. If I catch myself asking whether I like church 'done' like this, then I am asking the wrong question. If I catch myself thinking that I might not join in with something because I don't like it done 'like that', then I am missing the point – Church is not about keeping me entertained or happy, but about the renewal and flourishing of all God's creation. The meaning, the purpose, the point of it all is about how we grow together in love; how we grow closer to and more like Jesus. Those are the questions I must ask myself, as I struggle with my face covering or my internet connection or protective gloves and hand gel: how do I show love for my neighbour when we cannot behave in the way we are used to behave? Following on from the Vicar's letter last week: how can I best show kindness to others at the moment?

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On 14 August, the government amended its guidance so as to permit singing by a small choir in an act of worship (but not by the congregation). This is wonderful news for us as a worshipping community for whom singing is such a major part of the way in which we express our praise of God, and for many people such a great help in knowing the presence and character of God. Our Director of Music, Simon Earl, as you might imagine, has been quick off the mark to assemble a small choir for our Sunday services on 23rd and 30th August, and is planning to resume rehearsals with our own choirs and to bring them back into service in

September. Just like all of us, the members of the choirs have to maintain social distancing, so this will impact both on the number of singers permitted and their seating arrangements, all of which we are still working out. But the good news is that choral singing will return at our 10.00am Sunday service from 23rd August.

The Christchurch Dementia Friendly Community Alliance is offering some online training in dementia awareness and it would be really good if anyone who has not already done this 'Dementia Friends' training would take this opportunity to do so now. This applies especially to those who volunteer as welcomers, stewards or in the gift shop or café: it is important that as many of us as possible are aware of and sensitive to the circumstances of people living with dementia and their carers. If you are interested in this, please contact either me or James Guthrie (who co-ordinates our welcomers).

Christchurch Community Partnership has established a network to enable people to form groups to have a chat together by telephone. This is organised by a facilitator, who sets up the call and connects all the members of the group into the call. The idea is to offer a form of social contact to people who are missing their usual ways of enjoying company and a chat. If you are interested in this, please contact me, or if you know someone you think might be interested, do pass on the information.

Christchurch Foodbank Plus received two awards recently from the High Sheriff of Dorset, one of which was an individual award for Tracy Blick, the manager. The awards recognise the huge contribution that Tracy and the Foodbank + make to our local community and the extraordinary efforts they have made during these most difficult times in recent months. The demands on the Foodbank show no sign of reducing and their food requests for this week are: tinned carrots, corn and potatoes, tinned macaroni and ravioli, tinned fruit, biscuits, tinned hot dogs, ham, corned beef. There is a collection point in the Priory.

The Parish Electoral Roll is being revised to ensure that it remains up-to-date. Robert Philipson is the person responsible for this – if you have any questions, do please contact Robert on 01202 4833316. Here is the formal notice:

" ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF CHRISTCHURCH ELECTORAL ROLL

Notice is hereby given that the Ecclesiastical Parish of Christchurch Electoral Roll is being **REVISED**. Any person whose name is **NOT ALREADY** on the Electoral Roll needs to fill out a form,

- or if you have changed your address since this time last year,
- or if you know of anybody whose name is on the Roll but who has either died,
- or have moved during the year.

When filled out please return the form to me either via the Priory Vestry or directly by the 19th September 2020 at the latest. Fr Charles and Clergy Team use the Electoral Roll as a means of identifying and communicating with members of their congregation, therefore, it essential that the Roll is kept up to date. The second form called "supplementary electoral roll" is there to provide some additional information to help the Clergy to identify you more easily.

In line with the Diocese, you are being asked to provide telephone numbers and an email address (if you have one). This extra information will make it much easier for the Clergy Team to make contact if the need should arise.

Failure to have your name on the Ecclesiastical Parish of Christchurch Electoral Roll will mean you will not be able to vote at or attend the Parish AGM, stand for a member of the PCC, Deanery Synod or Churchwarden.

Robert Phillipson, Parish of Christchurch Electoral Roll Officer"

With my love and prayers for the week ahead,



Reverend Jonathan Evans