

The Parish of Christchurch



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

for Sunday 5 September, 2021

Dear Friends,

“Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness” – so begins John Keats’ poem “To Autumn”. I’m bound to say, however, that images of “mellow fruitfulness” – or any of the other soporific analogies from later in the poem – are not what come to mind at the beginning of September.

Instead, September is a time when parishes and churches, as well as schools, pick up many of their activities again after the Summer break. It’s a busy time. Hopefully, the fruitfulness will follow; but first, there is much to be done, information to pass on, and hopefully some encouragements to share.

One of the groups starting back this weekend is the Priory Choir. The pandemic has been a very difficult time for virtually every choir across the country, and ours is no exception; so it is good news indeed that from this Sunday our singers shall be playing their part in worship at the Priory once again.

To state the obvious, choirs exist in order to sing; and as government regulations prevented amateur choirs from rehearsing and singing in public until comparatively recently, it has been enormously challenging for any choir simply to keep going. For example, the repertoire that our younger singers had rehearsed, learned and sung in public is quickly forgotten and has now to be learned all over again; alongside this is the need to build up confidence in one another, to trust oneself and one’s fellow choristers to come in on an entry – this all takes time to rebuild. So please do not expect the choir from the outset to be singing all the different parts of our choral services that they, and we, have been used to – not yet. They will get there; with our support, understanding and encouragement that day will come.

Junior Church also starts again this Sunday, meeting in Room 8 during the Priory 10.00am Sung Eucharist, with activities, music, stories and fun for all children up to Year 5. The group for above Year 5 starts in late September. To find out more, please contact Julie Mills on cchfamilies@christchurchpriory.org.

A number of you have been asking when Small Groups will be starting again. The intention is to restart Small Groups at the beginning of October. More information next week!

Mothers Union is also starting to meet again, beginning on Tuesday 7th September at 2pm in room 8, Priory House. They would welcome anyone who would like to join them that afternoon.

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Update on Covid-19 transitional arrangements

As promised, there has been a review of our arrangements in the parish during the transition back to ‘normal’ circumstances. The Church of England has designated the responsibility for making decisions about how to proceed with the incumbent. This is a responsibility I take seriously. In thinking about these issues, I have found one part of the CofE’s current guidance particularly helpful:

“Everyone has a different set of criteria by which they judge whether they feel safe in different situations. For many people the relaxation of restrictions is a source of significant anxiety ... care should be taken not to make assumptions about how someone else is feeling about moving to Step 4.”

With this in mind, and in consultation with colleagues:

- As we are no longer required to observe a one-way system, from this Sunday the congregations at the Priory will be able to leave via Cloister Way, the North Porch and the West Door. The St George’s congregation will continue to exit by the West Door. As before, please avoid congestion at or near any of the exits.

- From next Sunday, 12th September, we shall bring back the practice of the congregation coming forward to receive Communion at a standing station from one of the clergy. Please wait in your seats until you are directed to move by one of the sidesmen.
- For now, the South side of the Priory Nave will continue to be screened, giving those who wish an opportunity to sit in one of the 'pods'. The North side will still be open seating.
- From time to time it may be necessary to use every row in the Priory or St George's, most often for a special service but occasionally for a concert. When this happens, you are encouraged to wear a mask, in line with our 'Covid considerate' approach.
- These and other arrangements will be reviewed again at the end of September. If you have any questions or concerns about these matters, please get in touch with me. Thank you for your co-operation.

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Retiring collection for British Red Cross

This Sunday we shall be holding an emergency collection again to support the Afghan people through the British Red Cross. If you are coming to church, please put your donation in one of the baskets. If you would like to donate online, you can do so via <https://donate.redcross.org.uk/appeal/afghanistan-crisis-appeal>. Thank you.

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Choral Evensong with the Revd Jonathan Evans

A reminder that Jonathan Evans will be preaching at Choral Evensong on Sunday 12 September at 6.30pm. Everyone is warmly invited to this service and the post-service reception.

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Induction of the Revd Jonathan Evans, Sunday 3 October at 3.00pm

If you would like to book a place on a coach to attend Jonathan's induction, please let the Parish Secretary, Mrs. Maureen Whiles, know by **12 noon, Thursday 9th September**. Once we know how many of you are interested, we shall be able to book a coach of the appropriate size. Please can you also let her know if you intend to be there, but will be travelling independently. This will help Jonathan's parishioners organise the catering arrangement.

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Harvest Supper Chrissy Westlake, Chair for The Friends of the Priory Church, writes:

"After careful consideration and following a recent risk assessment it is with reluctance that it has been decided that the Harvest Supper for this year will again be cancelled. Given the facts that the infection rates are rising and are likely to do so in the next few weeks, it would be difficult to consider placing at least 50 people together inside a building for approximately 2/3 hours. We need a minimum of 50 guests before the caterers will consider supporting the event. Some guests may be perfectly happy to share tables, some may not and that in itself will impose a problem. We did not take this decision lightly and even considered a zoom option with hampers being collected or delivered, but again, it will negate a lot of work for this to happen and feel at the present time we need to 'watch and wait'. I know that we all have to learn to live with this dreadful disease and that is happening every day with careful judgements being made, but we are far from being through this difficult period and wish to proceed with caution. We as a charity continue to thank you for your support, it is very much appreciated. Stay safe and hope to see you soon."

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Above all, there is the supreme encouragement that "God is here, his Spirit is with us", as He has been throughout these long months of the pandemic. And while none of us can predict what may happen in the coming weeks, God remains our strength, our hope, our inspiration and that He continues to pour out the Holy Spirit on his Church, here and everywhere. In Him we trust. We are right to do so. May God bless us all, and those for whom you pray.

Charles Stewart