

Parish Newsletter January 16th 2021

Dear friends,

This week has been quite eventful and busy, in spite of lockdown. On Tuesday we had a PCC meeting on Zoom and I think that although this method of getting people together has some drawbacks, we can, nevertheless move plans forward and communicate reasonably effectively. We usually get full attendance (!) now people can join in from the comfort and warmth of their own homes, and, dare I say, also have a drink of some sort to hand (to help the vocal chords, obviously).

The greater part of the meeting was taken up with the fabric of the churches: the works on the new boiler at St. Michael's – more about that in a moment – and the various issues at St. George's. It's not always the older churches which have more problems, in my experience. Victorian buildings don't always wear as well as medieval buildings, with their very strong construction. St. George's was built to last – but it has damp issues, bat issues, re-wiring issues, recent storm damage and ongoing projects such as providing toilet facilities. The PCC members are all keen to safeguard both churches for future generations, regardless of our current circumstances.

People will come back to church, I have no doubt, and everyone will be keen to rebuild in terms of congregational numbers. Right now, we have to take account of the risks of mixing people together. I was able to assure the PCC that I take note of the Bishop's latest guidelines about safety during the pandemic – refraining from keeping people talking after church, as I used to. Worship ends with the blessing, or at St. Michael's the dismissal: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, in the name of Christ, Amen. And then we go home, uplifted, I hope – but socially distant. For the time being.

Yesterday I had a message about the Bishop of Lewes who has apparently decided that the churches in his area of Sussex should be closed. I am glad that this hasn't happened here yet. But I will follow the Bishop's advice, should he change his mind about our West Sussex churches remaining open for worship. Meanwhile, the regulations around singing in church have changed – for the worse, not the better. All singing is felt to be unwise at the moment, so we will just have music from the organ or electric piano. I am very grateful to all those choir members who have been prepared to sing on Sundays. One day we will be able to sing together with confidence again.

Now for some good news – yesterday the new boiler at St. Michael's got fired up and it works. I will put it on again today, crossing my fingers and praying at the same time. I have had bad experiences with boilers – but I am sure this one will be fine! I'm looking forward to being in a warmer church tomorrow – last Sunday was icy cold. My hands were so cold I was having trouble turning pages.

Meanwhile, keep safe, everyone, keep praying for the parish, for family, friends and neighbours. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Romans 8*. With every blessing,

Alison