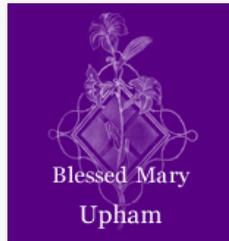


St Peters Church

Bishops Waltham



St Peter's and Blessed Mary ***September and October 2020*** **The next stage on our journey...**



Dear all

Followers on The Way.... **"Come follow me" *Jesus in the Gospels***

As we move into the Autumn period, I wanted to send a special communication to you.

Firstly, I would like to say a heartfelt thank you for all you have done in the last few months for the people of our communities of Bishop's Waltham, Upham and surrounding areas: for being both good neighbours in practical love and care, and also Christian witnesses of Jesus to others, both known and unknown.

Secondly, I also wanted to say a heartfelt thank you for all your support of St Peter's and Blessed Mary even though we have been physically apart: joining in with the various opportunities to pray and with our online services. I am especially grateful to all those who have contributed 'online' when it has sometimes been outside of comfort zones: leading, speaking, reading, praying, and being interviewed. The creativity in music has been especially wonderful and blessed both us and those who have watched via face book and you tube.

But what next?

As we are all aware, the way ahead is not yet clear on many fronts, but in faith we want to step towards both 'going back' to some previous good things, but also 'going onto' to some new good things. Over the Autumn, I hope we can use this time to 'explore' who and what God is calling us to be as a Christian community in light of what we have been learning in this time: ***in our prayer life; in our group life; in our congregational life; and in our community life where we live, work and rest.***

If you have a few minutes, I would be very grateful if you could take some time to carefully read the sections below (as well as the one about your congregation/service) which I hope will help explain what is happening overall and answer key questions. There is a lot to take in, but I am sure all will become clear over the coming weeks and months. If you do have any particular questions, then please do telephone or send me an e-mail - it is always nice to hear from you so please don't hesitate to be in touch.

With my prayers

Revd James and The Wardens (Robin, Claire and Colin)

What have we been learning?

How should we re-shape ourselves?



Covid Time Reflections:

A new 'Rhythm of Life'

Covid has been one of those '**once in a lifetime events**' that has given us an opportunity **to take time, to pause, stop and take stock**, and, through this time, God is I am sure, like many others are thinking, wanting to communicate a new vision for life in general, and also for our Christian community of St Peter's and Blessed Mary.

I am sure you will have been doing your own reflecting and deciding what might be different for you and your family in the future. None of us have complete or clear answers yet, but if you would like to read something of my various reflections in recent months, please do read my Rectors Blogs/Parish News Comments which can be found here:

[Church of the Past and the Future](#)

[Responding Reflecting Reconstructing](#)

[From BC to AC](#)

[A Time to Reflect: What would be good to not go back to normal?](#)

[Easter Hope](#)

If these reflections convey something of what God is saying, there is before us an exciting opportunity for change rather than just wanting to overcome the challenges of Covid for church life. In this sense, Covid should be seen as the opportunity for change and not the cause of change.....we should I think be mainly excited to be in this time to see what God

is going to do!

What is God saying about a new vision?:

Followers of The Way

There are perhaps several ways in which things could be expressed, but the one to me that seems to be most helpful is that rather than just call ourselves Christians we need to see ourselves more as active Disciples who are hearing the call of Jesus **'Come follow me'**.

Going forwards, whatever part of the church we are in, maybe going back to a previous congregation, or going to be part of new gatherings, we should see ourselves as being: **'Followers of the Way'** and those who are **'Walking the Way'**, following in the steps of Jesus:....*a daily real life Discipleship/Apprenticeship way of Christian living, based around the message of the Scriptures, for example as seen in Luke 24 'The Road to Emmaus' and Acts 2 'The early church'*.

Examples of living as 'followers/disciples/apprentices' of Jesus are:

....to have a **'Rhythm of Resting'** in God, as Jesus rested in his Father so we can be Jesus like to others

... to have **'Rhythm of Life'** that fosters our life to be more like Jesus: *'Resting, Retreating, Reflecting, Refreshing, Repenting, Responding, Returning'*

....to allow, in our time with God, **to be loved by Jesus so that we know we are loved**, and as we are loved, we can love him back and love others, and in turn others come to know that they are loved

....to be a people who in love **'walk out' amongst people as Jesus did**, gave them attention and shared with them God's love.....they were attracted to him, changed and so naturally became his followers

....to be a movement of people who go out and are a **'Holy Presence' with others each day**...to be little temples of the Holy Spirit!

....to be a Christian people who have a **'Rule of Life'** to be **'Followers of the Way'**

In light of this Vision, how might we best re-shape ourselves?:

Small Groups and Congregations

To fulfil this vision we will need to re-shape our congregational gatherings and small groups to be ones in which being Discipleship/Apprenticeship to Jesus can be re-discovered, learned, modelled, shared and supported. Reshaping means especially **raising up the place and importance of our small groups life and finding the**

right place for our congregations/services.

Small Groups - as we see in Acts 2 and from church history, small groups have always been the place from where new Christian life has started and discipleship nurtured through: teaching, prayer, fellowship and witness.

Congregational Gatherings - congregations as we have them today have not always been the major focus (they did not happen for the first 4 centuries until 'churches' had been built!) but even then congregations were not the main regular weekly meeting, but rather more for periodic corporate celebrations.

There are questions to address if our church is to be re-shaped in the above way:

Both large 'gathered/celebration' congregations and small 'discipleship' groups are needed, but in what blend?

How can people be invited and welcomed to our small group/activities as well as in a congregation?

How can lay leaders be helped to lead and disciple others?

What are the key things we want our leaders (licensed and lay) to be doing?

What do we want and need from our leaders, both licensed and lay?:

The Pattern of Jesus

If our individual responsibility is to be part of a small group, as well as a congregation, committed to be 'Followers of the Way' and discipling each other, we need in turn support our lay and licensed leaders to follow as much as they can the pattern of Jesus:

Lay Leaders: to be more involved in leading, mentoring, discipleship and caring for those in their small groups.

Rector/Licensed Leaders: as well as having a 'ministry to many' (in our larger congregations/gatherings) to have time doing for the things Jesus did with a few: prayer, ministry of the word, reaching out to new people and investing in the discipleship of new leaders.

Our Congregational Life



As we move into the Autumn, we are keen to develop what we can do to be together in congregational worship, both in previous and new ways. Below is what has been planned for Sundays and midweek and reflects the spiritual context we are in (see above) and also practical.

The 'practical' context is one of **ongoing social distancing requirements** that we need to do, for example: social distancing of 2m; the mandatory wearing of face coverings; no physical contact or singing; reduced numbers and availability in our teams (lay and licensed); and reduced capacity (St Peter's 70 approx, Blessed Mary 32)

St Peter's Sunday 9 am: The 9 am

I am pleased to announce that (replacing Sunday 4 pm and 9 am Live) we will be re-starting back in our wonderful church of St Peter's from this coming Sunday 6th September at 9 am. We are aiming to run the service as normally as we can focusing on 'what we can do' not 'what we can't' - it will be lovely just to be back!

The things that we have to do for the moment are: to wash hands as we arrive and sign a register; to wear face masks throughout (except to receive communion); to be 2 m from each other (unless in a husband/wife or family pod); to sing and to receive communion wine. However, the choir will be present and sing for us; we can enjoy fellowship with those that we are sitting near; and I hope that we can have some fellowship time outside (maintaining 2 m distancing) by bringing our own flask of tea/coffee and some biscuits or cake to eat!

The service will be streamed on face book and you tube for those who are unable to come

back to join us yet. The toilets will be available for use, one person at a time, but please ensure you use gel on entry and wash your hands on exit.

Blessed Mary Sunday 11 am: Village Service

I am pleased to announce that (replacing Sunday 4 pm and 9 am Live) we will be re-starting back in our wonderful village church of Blessed Mary from this coming Sunday 6th September at 11 am. We are aiming to run the service as normally as we can focusing on 'what we can do' not 'what we can't' - it will be lovely just to be back!

The things that we have to do for the moment are: to wash hands as we arrive and sign a register; to wear face masks throughout (except to receive communion); to be 2 m from each other (unless in a husband/wife or family pod); to sing and to receive wine. However, the choir will be present and sing for us; we can enjoy fellowship with those that we are sitting near; and I hope that we can have some fellowship time outside (maintaining 2 m distancing) by bringing our own flask of tea/coffee and some biscuits or cake to eat! The toilet will be available for use, one person at a time, and please ensure you use gel on entry and wash your hands on exit.

We are aiming at each Sunday being a 'village service' engaging to all. We are going to be moving where we place the emphasis for families to festival services, a Coffee Morning/Preschool Group; a Post School Activity/Group; Holiday Clubs; and a new Youth Group. Our new FCY Worker will help us with this. For those who enjoy regular informal worship and/or need more weekly family input, St Peter's and Blessed Mary will be offering a mixed programme to support families.

Sunday 10:30 am: The 10:30 am

It has been quite a journey over the last few months and exciting to be an 'online' congregation engaging with a spectrum of people: the previous hall congregation, those from Blessed Mary who enjoy more informal worship and new people.

In many ways it would be good to continue to solely online, however, it seems clear at the moment that this is not sustainable: it is hard to be church together when we are apart in homes, especially for parents with children; it is hard to maintain an online service for the few who are doing this, and bearing in mind that other churches are perhaps better placed to do this in a professional way 'to watch'. There is a good case to continue our presence online in other ways, most notably in prayer, but perhaps not in terms of a service 'to be watched'.

So what next?

The proposal is to take the Sundays over September and October as a time to 'explore' the new vision that is emerging as explained above. To do this, all who have been joining in online, are welcome to come to the next Sundays in the following ways:

6th September - 10:30 Online - to hear about the way ahead

13th September - starting at The Rectory to hear about the vision and to join a 'Way Group'

20th September-1st November - to take time in 'Way Groups' to explore what it means to be a follower of Jesus on the Way of the Christian life...

There will be some shape to these times, but also freedom to explore. It is proposed that Way Groups be run with people grouped (say 8-10 people) according their stage of life:

- to maintain social distancing between the younger and older
- to help each group to engage for their stage of life

During this time we will talk with each other about ideas for the future and the medium/longer term.

Why not go back to meeting as a whole congregation straight away?

There are various reasons as follows:

First, I and the leadership team think we would be wise, as explained above, that we do need to try something different to help see what should emerge.

Second, we are unable to have one service after the other on Sundays due to the issue of cleaning, helper/resource issues (set up/clear up/cleaning) and the need to avoid unnecessary contact between older and younger (the later going back to school shortly).

Third, informal/modern/family services are more intimate (held in wide v long format) and require close sitting, singing and interactions between all ages, which we cannot do

Fourth, to re-start the hall service in church, with social distancing i.e., everyone being 2m apart with face masks on, would not be enjoyable or workable.

Finally, proper AV equipment and broadband needs to be installed to enable this kind of service in the future.

Other Sunday and Midweek Services/Groups

Thursday 10 am 'Thursday 10 am' – to re-start fortnightly in St Peter's from 10th Sept

Wednesday 10 am 'Wednesday 10 am' – to continue weekly on Zoom

Given all that is going on, and much reduced availability of leaders/helpers/teams (lay and licensed) other services will not be re-starting for the moment. If you attend one of these services we very much hope you will be able to come along to the services that will be happening:

Sunday 8:00 am BCP Service

Sunday 6:30 pm Reflective Service

Sunday 6:30 pm Evensong

Over the Autumn and into early 2021 we will be reviewing all our whole service pattern to look at what is sustainable in the longer term. The frequency and range of services will need to more focused so we can in future do a few things better rather than too many things often at a stretch. Some of the services and groups that do go on will need to be more lay led in the future.

Festival Services

As numbers in St Peter's and Blessed Mary are limited (70 and 32 respectively) it is proposed that our forthcoming festival services will be held outside where numbers are not so limited:

27 September 11 am - Blessed Mary Harvest Service - The Churchyard

(St Peter's Harvest will celebrated in St Peter's at 9 am and as part of the 'Way Group' meetings)

8th November 10:50 am - St Peter's Remembrance Service - The War Memorial

8th November 10:50 am - Blessed Mary Remembrance Service - The Churchyard

We hope that restrictions may have eased by December for our Advent/Christmas Carols and Christmas Services, but if not these may also be outside in some form, or perhaps held as a series of smaller services in the church over a couple of weeks.

Our Times with God



Personal Prayer

You may already have a good pattern of a daily time with God, but if not or you would like to try something else why not give one or more of these a try?:

Daily Hope - offers music, prayers and reflections at the end of a telephone line. The FREE line is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044** and has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.

Explore Bible Notes - app for teenagers or adults to help read through the Bible: [Explore](#)

Desiring God - resources answering questions in 10 minutes: [Desiring God](#)

UCB Word for Today - Thought for the Day [Word For Today](#)

Lectio 365 - Daily Devotional [Lectio 365](#)

Brian Draper - Thought for the Day [Brian Draper](#)

Praying with Others

Alongside our own personal devotions at home, there are lots of ways we can be encouraged in our prayer life at the moment and it would be lovely if you might join in with something of all that there is:

Start the Day 9-9:05 am (Mon-Fri) - please join James via the St Peter's Facebook page of You Tube channel to hear a simple thought for the day and a prayer

Prayer and Meditation 8-8:45 pm (Wed) - please contact Revd Moray Thomas

moraythomas@btinternet.com 01329-833174

Morning Prayer

St Peters 8:45-9am (Mon to Fri) - please contact Wendy Cooper

wendy@barafundle.plus.com 01489-896186

Blessed Mary 8:30am (Mon) and 10am (Wed) - please contact Revd Jane Beloe

janibeloe@btinternet.com 01489-860452

Prayer Group 6 pm (Tues and Weds)

This is a facebook prayer group to connect with each other and God in a more informal way

For more information and about how to join in please contact:

- Emmie Kerby emma.kerby@hotmail.com 07940323483

- Emma Andersen emma-simply-flowers.org 01489-890291

Prayer Diary

Revd Tom Johns creates a daily monthly prayer diary for us to use which is really helpful and valuable. If you would like a copy please click here: [Prayer Diary](#)

Our Group Life

Home/Small Groups, Activity Groups and FCY Groups



We are very much hoping that (with appropriate social distancing measures) our Home Groups, small/activity groups and Family/Children/Youth Groups can re-start over the next weeks in venues that are large enough, for example:

On church premises: Church 72 , Hall 18 , Stables 8

In a cafe/pub: according to their seating arrangements

In a lounge: large enough in a home

Outdoors: as long as the weather is warm and dry enough

Activity Groups: G@SPS, W@SPS, Mother's Union, Coffee Mornings, Men's Breakfast,

Ladies Group, Choir, Band, Bell Ringing

Family/Children/Youth Group's

We are planning as follows:

Overflow - to re-start from October

Messy Church – re-starting online in September and then in/around the church from October

GWNN – re-starting with from 13 September

Lighthouse – will be incorporated into the 10:30 our 'Way Groups'

Teeny Tinies – re-started in August meeting virtually via WattApp and socially in the Palace ruins

Tea and Toast – to perhaps re-start over September once plans are in place

Our Community Life



We very much hope that our individual involvement in outreach and mission can continue and grow over the Autumn as we get back to our activities in community life, or get involved for the first time. There are so many opportunities to be involved as Christians where we can love, care, listen and speak , and so be witnesses to God.

As we look ahead, I very much hope we can continue to be Christians who keep an outward focus on others as much as ourselves. As Bishop William Temple once said: *"The church is the only organisation which truly exists for the benefit of it's non-members."* I am sure that God really wants us to keep this focus we have learned in the last few months individually, in our various groups and activities, and as a whole church.
