

Letter from the Vicar

Corpus Christi
Thursday 11 June 2020

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I write to you today on the Feast of Corpus Christi – The Body of Christ – a day when The Church gives thanks for the Institution of the Holy Communion by Jesus at the Last Supper. This year this feast is both bitter sweet. It continues to be a great sadness that we are unable to gather together, in person, around the Lord's Table and share in the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood. For me, it was a personal joy and privilege to be back at the High Altar of St Francis Church, Hammerfield – offering you all in prayer and praise before God, and yet a sadness that you, the Body of Christ in this place, were not able to share that with me, other than virtually and spiritually. Our separation is hard, and not being able to physically receive the Sacrament is hard. But this will not last indefinitely and it by no means prevents us from being the Body of Christ in this area. It has been tremendously encouraging and heart-warming to hear how you have stepped-up during these days of Lockdown to be Christ's hands, Christ's feet, Christ's ears, Christ's eyes and cared for each other, your neighbours, and strangers. You are very much part of the Body of Christ, here, and I thank you for all that you have done and been, and continue to do and be in the name of the Church.

Last weekend we took a major leap forward in our trails with online worship: we managed to get YouTube to accept our video! I hope this will make it easier for you to join-in our virtual worship. We are also working on the quality of the audio – this may take a little while to perfect but each week I think we are getting a little nearer. Below are a couple of 'behind the scenes' shots of all the tech required! I continue to be most grateful for Keith Beniston and Stacey Barton for the tech support they are giving. It is interesting to know that 69 devices have logged-on to our Service from last Sunday which could mean that 138 people joined our service if we assume 2 people per device!

Many of you will have seen or heard the Government announcement late last Saturday evening that places of Worship are to be permitted to open for Private Prayer from Monday 15 June. Quite why it was announced on a Saturday evening I have no idea but nonetheless I am delighted that we are permitted to be back in our church buildings albeit not for public Worship. This week we have worked hard to enable St John's church to open on Monday. Naturally there are restrictions in place and I would ask that when you come in to St John's to pray that you abide by the guidance that is in place - both for your safety and the safety of others. All this week the glass doors have been open and in the porch we have enabled folk to leave prayer requests and or light candles. That practice will continue along with the opportunity to actually go into church and light candles in church. For the time being St John's church – our Parish church – will be the only church building open every day, much like it was pre-lockdown, between 9.30am and 5pm. This will enable us to carry-out the required cleansing and other precautions. I do hope that you will be able to come into St John's at some point, but I also understand that if you are 'sheltering' this will not be possible.

I am also pleased to say that the House of Bishops have lifted one of their restrictions and have now permitted funerals to be conducted in churches. We await further guidance on weddings as they are only allowed in extreme circumstances at present. As soon as I know any new directives from both the National Church and the Government I will let you know.

One sad note that I must bring to you is that Stella Chandler died in hospital on Monday afternoon. She had been in hospital for about a week following a fall. The hospital enabled family to visit and her parting from this world was peaceful. A private funeral and cremation is due to be arranged but we are working with the family to arrange a Service of Thanksgiving at a later date. As and when I have more details I will send these round via the Newsletter distribution list. We extend our sincere condolences to Stella's family and pray that the angels may greet her and lead her to paradise.

Next Sunday, every Parish in the Diocese has been invited to join the Cathedral community for Sunday Worship as we celebrate St Alban. Sadly the annual pilgrimage cannot happen in its usual format but we are invited to join virtually. I hope you will be able to join at 10.00am. A link and Order of Service will be available on our website.

For now, as always, I send you my love, prayers, and best wishes as we move into another phase of Lockdown, and my hope that it will not be long before we can see each other face to face.

In Christ,

Mike

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