

## Letter from the Vicar

Friday 18 September

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Although Covid-19 has put a stop to so much, last Sunday I actually did a 'first' for me in this parish: I presided over the holy Eucharist at all 3 of our Churches in the same day – 8.00am at St John's, 10.00am at St Francis', 11.30am at St Stephen's . It was a joy to be back with the folk of St Francis' as they re-establish themselves and to lead and be with the people of St Stephen's on their first Sunday back as a Church community. The number of people returning to these churches was also positive with everyone from pre-Covid-19 accounted for and some new faces.

Last Sunday also saw another first in these strange times: Choral Evensong returned. It was a triumph. The choir – all socially distanced – sounded magnificent. Their joy at being able to sing together again was irrepressible and evident in their singing. To have live singing again during a public Act of Worship was transformational and I was not alone in having goose bumps whilst they were singing. I should like to state my sincere thanks to the choir, and especially to Keith our DoM and those who assisted him, for enabling the choir's safe return and for making this service to be such a powerful and moving expression of worship. Although the choir can now sing more regularly we are going to limit the number of times they help lead us in worship but, at present, they are due to sing again at next month's Choral Evensong (11 October).

In order to be able to appropriately socially distance the choir we needed to remove the choir stalls. These are currently being stored in the Lady Chapel until they can return to normal. But by moving them the view of the church has changed quite significantly. If you haven't yet been back into St John's I recommend a visit as this open vista is quite appealing.

Once again most of my week has been spent planning for future events whilst also conducting the usual pastoral round of calls and leading services. It really is good to be able to be back in our churches to offer praise to God and prayer for you, his flock. Pre-lockdown I think I took this for granted. Now I rejoice at this privilege.

One of the events I have been planning this week is a virtual Harvest Quiz. This will be conducted over Zoom and will be limited to 20 teams of up to 4 players (2 households being permitted to come together). Interactive questions will appear on your screen and then using another device (and the free app Kahoot!) answers are submitted. This is very much intended to be a social event but the fundraising element will also be most welcome. If you are interested in signing-up a team please contact me. First come, first served. £5 per player.

Now I will leave you to enjoy the Indian Summer, but as ever, I hope you are all remaining safe and well, and secure in the knowledge of our God who loves us, cares for us, and enfolds us in his arms.

In Christ,



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