**Letter from the Vicar**

Friday 9 October

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Last Sunday was another reminder in our annual cycle of former (and hopefully future) glories and the limits placed upon us at present as we celebrated both Harvest Festival and St Francis’ Patronal Festival. Both festivals were celebrated with joy, colour, fun, and devotion. It was a delight to be able to welcome Bishop Michael to St John’s as he led us in our Harvest celebrations and then in the evening to be joined by Fr Ben as our guest preacher. In both liturgies we were reminded that God sows the seed, God nurtures, God produces the fruit – and we play our part in responding to God’s promptings and nurturing and harvesting as bid. Despite the restrictions Covid-19 is placing upon us it was great to see strong congregations (granted social distancing is making our churches look fuller!) and people continuing to follow the guidance.

This Sunday we have our delayed Annual Parochial Church Meeting. I feel like I have been talking about this forever as I think I first wrote about it in January. As always it is a chance to have your say in how the Parish is run and to hear/read how 2019 turned out. This year has been trying and testing (to put it mildly) causing us to do things differently: to worship at home; to take part virtually in both services, social activities, and meetings; to return to in-person worship; to cancel planned events and even (for the first time ever) not to be able to pay our Parish Share to the Diocese towards the cost of Ministry. We have had to do things differently but we will bounce-back and it is important that we continue to plan for the future – electing new officers and representatives – who are able to help lead us forward. I know quite a few people will not be able to be with us in person on Sunday and have sent-in their apologies. The Meeting will be shown on our Website on Monday by 12noon for those who would like to hear/see what happened. I will let you know in next week’s letter all the salient details including sharing the names of those who have been elected.

This week has not been the easiest for us, as part of the Church of England, with media coverage focusing on the independent review and report into the Church’s handling of Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults which was published. The report is long overdue and will take some time to be fully implemented throughout the Church but it has, throughout it hearings, raised our awareness of past mistakes and cover-ups, called us to be vigilant for new cases of abuse, and enhanced our procedures and policies in caring for all God’s people. As a Diocese, and as a Parish, we take Safeguarding incredibly seriously and will maintain the highest standards and care moving forward. We are, of course, deeply sorry for the pains and distress caused by a small minority within the wider Church and will seek to support any survivors on an individual basis.

Next week I will update you further on plans for Remembrance, Advent, and Christmas which are slowly taking shape. We are working on plans in line with the current restrictions but we hope that we will be able to adapt as need arises. As we have seen in the Press case numbers are rising so we must all remain vigilant to help protect one another and remember the mantra, hands; face; space!

I look forward to seeing many of you on Sunday morning for the Parish Eucharist and our APCM, but in the meantime I leave you with my prayers for each of you; keep safe; and remain secure in the knowledge of our God who loves us, cares for us, and enfolds us in his arms.

In Christ,

 

The Reverend Michael Macey The Reverend Canon Dr Ruth Goatly

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