**Letter from the Vicar**

Saturday 20 March 2021

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The date 23 March 2020 will live long in my memory. It’s a date I always remember as it’s my brother’s birthday, but last year it took on extra significance – Lockdown was announced. Come Tuesday next week, we will have lived with some restrictions – in one form or another – for a whole year. Tragically over 125,000 people have died to the virus and that’s not counting people who have died due to procedures being cancelled, missed appointments, or through increased anxiety or mental health problems. It’s been a hard year. To mark the anniversary we are all invited to observe a minutes silence at 12noon on Tuesday in remembrance of those who lost the fight to Covid, but also in grateful thanks for our Key Workers – for those who cared for the sick and dying, who ensured essential services continued, who put others first. This is intended to be something we do at home but if anyone would like to join me at St John’s for this moment of reflection you would be most welcome.

Tomorrow sees Public Worship resume within the Parish. It has been very strange recording services again to a near empty church knowing that you are then participating from the comfort of your own homes. I have longed to be able to welcome you back and to worship with you. The data looks encouraging and now seems the right time to resume. But it is for you to decide if you feel ready and comfortable to return at the present time. All the necessary Covid-secure measures are in place and, as I type, our churches are being given a thorough clean (on top of the daily wipe-down St John’s receives each daily) so that they are welcoming and safe for all.

Attached with the letter is a letter from the Churchwardens regarding our Easter Appeal. “Digital Church” as it has come to be known has been an important part of our worshipping life this past year enabling us to worship together but from the safety of our own homes. Despite the best efforts of Keith Beniston and the Ministry Team we are limited in what we can offer due to insufficient Broadband at St John’s. It is impossible for us to Live-stream services so instead we have to pre-record them, edit, and then upload – all of which takes quite a significant amount of time. The Appeal this year is to make “Digital Church” part of the worshipping experience we offer on a permanent basis – to have secure and strong internet upload, multiple cameras, and a way of Live-streaming all our services. This would be of great use to those of our fellowship who are housebound in the future and would be a fantastic service to be able to offer families coming for Baptism, Funerals and Weddings where family members are unable to travel to St John’s for a whole host of reasons. I hope you will agree this is a worth-while project for us to be embarking upon.

Also attached to this letter is a poster of all the services to take place during Holy Week and Easter. I cannot tell you how much I am looking forward to celebrating the Resurrection with you this year after last year’s enforced exile. The memories are flooding back of conducting the Triduum at a make-shift Altar in my Study last year – a very moving experience but not the same as celebrating with you.

Yesterday, I had an unusual day. For the first time in I don’t know how long I actually had a day-off without the children. Both had served their time in isolation and had returned to school. Abbie’s nursery had also agreed to take her for an additional day. So I was child-free! To celebrate I cleared the garage (and broke the garage door in the process!), took rubbish to the Tip, and built 2 raised planters from scratch. Now my body aches but it was satisfying none-the-less. I hope you are still finding moments of relief in these strange times to keep you going.

As ever I leave you with my prayers and best wishes. I look forward to seeing you again and being able to worship with you. But for now, keep safe; keep positive; keep warm; and remain steadfast in faith that God loves us, cares for us, and enfolds us in his arms.

In Christ,

 The Reverend Michael Macey

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