



PARISHES BY THE WALL

Living Faith on the Frontier

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Dear Friend

I am delighted to be able to write to you to confirm that from Sunday 12 July we will be restarting public worship in the Parishes by the Wall with a Benefice Eucharist at 10.30am at St Cuthbert's Haydon Bridge, followed by a 10.30am Benefice Eucharist at all Hallows', Henshaw on 19th July .

I know that for many this has been a time of great anxiety and concern and being unable to find peace and solace in our regular pattern of worship has been a challenge. Equally I know that for many this has been a time of spiritual exploration as we have found new ways to worship, alone and with one another online.

As we begin this process, I wanted to write to you to outline our thinking and the planning that has been taking place as we begin to navigate the path ahead together.

Some basic information: The first is to say that just because we can return to church does not mean that we must. Many of you, I know, are still shielding or living in a household that is. Also, there will be some amongst us who are rightly cautious about returning to old habits straight away. I want to confirm that, alongside our reinstated acts of public worship, we will maintain our existing pattern of worship – Morning and Evening Prayer at 9am and 6pm on Facebook and emailed and posted weekly reflections – for at least until the end of August.

Secondly, I want to stress that the path out of lock-down is and will remain a slow and careful one. We need to ensure that we take each step carefully and continue to move forward together. For that reason, the pattern of worship we will offer from Sunday 12 July will remain in place until the end of August. I hope we will then be able develop and enrich this pattern as we continue to move out of lock-down together. Through this initial period our acts of public worship – which will be a combination of services of Holy Communion and Morning Prayer – will alternate between St Cuthbert's Haydon Bridge and All Hallows' Henshaw. At the same time the "other" church will be open for private prayer to send the strong message that our churches are now open on Sundays.

Thirdly, the worship we will offer in our buildings will, by definition, be limited in form and pattern. We will not, for instance be able to sing, but our worship will be enriched with music on the organ or CD. We very much welcome everyone who wishes to come, but we will not be able to offer specific provision for children and those children who do attend will need to remain with their family group throughout the service. In addition, we will need to ask those coming to church to follow some basic guidance on hand sanitizing, an encouragement to wear face masks, social distancing by family group, and allowing us to temporarily record their attendance for the purposes of "Track and Trace".

This will be a return – but not as we might have hoped or wanted – it will, however, be a return where our praise and thanks to God will be undiminished. After all, if the grave could not contain God's love for us, Government guidelines should not constrain our love and praise of him.

The pattern of Sunday worship for July and August: Our plan, which I have developed in consultation with the Churchwardens, and received by both PCCs, is that our acts of public worship through July and August will follow this two-week pattern beginning on Sunday 12 July.

Week 1: 9am: Morning Prayer, on our Facebook page and then available on YouTube
 10.30am: Holy Communion or Morning Prayer, St Cuthbert's Haydon Bridge
 10am-12noon: Private Prayer, All Hallows' Henshaw

Week 2: 9am: Morning Prayer, on our Facebook page and then available on YouTube
 10.30am: Morning Worship, All Hallows' Henshaw
 10am-12noon: Private Prayer, St Cuthbert's Haydon Bridge

We will advertise the exact form of the worship to be offered for the week ahead through the notice sheet, weekly emails, and on our social channels.

We believe that we have ample space for all those who wish to attend public worship to do so in a Covid-safe manner, but if we find that we have hit capacity we will offer additional acts of worship and may need to institute a system by which parishioners indicate if they intend to come to church so we can manage these issues.

Finance: I know that many of you have asked me about how the finances of the Parishes are managing through this trying season. I am pleased to say that because of the prudent management of our accounts in previous years we are weathering this storm as well as could be expected.

In reality both our Parishes will face an operating deficit for the coming year, but these can be managed within existing reserves (this is after all the "rainy day" we have always been planning for). The lockdown has meant that we have been unable to hold many of our most popular and enjoyable fundraising events. Many of you would have attended or supported these events and willingly supported the work of our Parishes by buying raffle tickets or attending events and the like . If everyone contributed what they would have spent at those events it would go a long way towards reducing the inevitable shortfall the Parishes face this year. I know of one Parish which raised over £1,000 by asking people to do just this. Likewise, if you are able to review your planned giving to help us continue to weather this storm, the Parish Treasurers, Churchwardens, or myself would be more than happy to discuss this with you.

In Haydon Bridge the treasurer is Tessa Simmonds who can be best contacts by email at tessaloyd@gmail.com. In Beltingham with Henshaw it is Dorothy McKenna who you can call on 344344 or email at mckenna.dorothy@aol.com.

Pastoral Care: It has been one of the unexpected delights of this time that I have been able to regularly telephone almost everyone we have contact details for in our Parishes. As our new patterns of life begin to develop I hope you will forgive me if the frequency of these calls begin to diminish. However I will continue to prioritise my calls for those who continue to be isolated through this time, and if there is anyone you are concerned about, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Finally... I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you all for your prayers and kind messages for me through this challenging period. It has been a great privilege, as your Vicar, to share in the joys and sorrows of this time with you all.

This next step is only a step, but one which we will take together. In Psalm 119 we are told that God is a "lantern to my feet, and a light upon my path" (Ps. 119:105). As we move forward together our first steps will be slow and careful, like picking our way along a dark path by torchlight. We might not be able to see very far, but we can see the light that illuminates our path. In the coming weeks and months, as we have through this strange season, our chief call is to remain fixed on God's light revealed to us in Jesus Christ knowing that even if the path ahead is not as clear as we would like, his light and comfort and hope remains.

This comes with every best wish,



The Rev'd Dr Benjamin Carter - Vicar