

Pastoral Letter #7 | 26th July 2020

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

John 15:12, NRSV

Dear «**Forenames**» «**Surname**»

The hot-topic of the month seems to be face coverings. Whatever we feel about them, they are increasingly becoming a reality we're going to need to get used to. The thing that I find interesting about the encouragement that they be worn is not that it protects the wearer from infection, but that it reduces the likelihood that the wearer will infect others.

So it seems to me that, perhaps, wearing a face covering could be a 2020 way of loving our neighbour over ourselves. Despite the fact wearing a face covering probably leaves us feeling uncomfortable, perhaps we need to set self aside in an effort to live in community together, helping others feel safer and protected, and showing we care for one another.

Worship at Home Pack

Enclosed, please find Worshipping Together for August. For the first Sunday of the month we again share a Love Feast together as part of our Worship on the Phone. Information about what this is, how it will work and how you can prepare for it are included within the booklet.

Continuing in Transition

Over the last couple weeks, the Transition Oversight Teams at Bognor and Felpham have completed the draft Full Building Risk Assessments and they are currently with Managing Trustees for them to read, reflect, feedback and adopt. Once these are adopted, we can complete the practical steps necessary to enable the buildings to be physically re-opened. I hope to meet with some representatives of Westergate in the next few days to begin the process there too.

The process of collating the risk assessments has already highlighted just how much work it will take to ensure we can safely reopen our buildings and ensure they are COVID-secure. Therefore, having the risk assessments in place is only one part of the whole. We also need to work out the practical steps of how we enable each activity to occur, for example for physically gathered worship we

need to think through how we steward, lead, and clean safely, as well as very practical things such as the offering and how we might be able to share communion. With many in our congregations particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, these questions are very real ones that I know we must take very seriously, but we also know there is a wide diversity of feeling about how ready we each are to physically gather again.

Therefore, to try to begin to get a truer sense of the feeling among us, you will also find a **short questionnaire** which I would appreciate you filling in and posting back to me, or alternatively you can give me a call with your responses. (If you're based at Felpham, you can also call Sue Allsopp Tel:584708) This will help us get a better picture of the feeling among us and help us with planning over the coming weeks.

Scattered Church

Last month I shared with you the idea of church being both gathered and scattered. That *“as we prepare to enter this transition phase, we must ask ourselves what aspects of being scattered church we should maintain (permanently, or as part of the transition) as we embrace being the community of God that both gathers and scatters”*

I know from conversations with some of you that you have found this image helpful, affirming and it has encouraged you to think more positively about the way we have been being God's community together through lockdown. Over the coming weeks, I encourage you to continue thinking about these motifs of gathering and scattering and especially pray about how God may be encouraging you to be more intentional in being part of a scattered church.

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go.

Luke 10:1, NRSV

Getting together in small ways outside of our buildings, for example in our homes or gardens, is likely, at least for now, to be easier than in our buildings, which will need extensive cleaning and management. I wonder, what could you do?

- Meet in groups of up to six (socially distanced) in someone's garden
- Meet via video or telephone conference
- Catch up over a coffee and cake (maybe bringing your own)
- bible study (formal or informal!)
- house or discipleship groups
- prayer meeting

- quiz
- worship
- book club
- organise a prayer walk
- hold a bring your own picnic
- organise a garden safari – where able bodied walk a route that passes the gardens of various folk are not able to walk, stopping for a chat along the way.
- Put cards through neighbours' letterboxes inviting them to request prayer

These are just a few ideas to get you started, and I and others can help resource you if that would be helpful. I'd love to hear some of your ideas, and even better, see you putting them into practice.

There is, of course, a need to be attentive to current guidance to ensure we are a scattered church in a way that is safe. We also need to think about how we can be accessible and inclusive to all, which means things like clear communication are important. But through inhabiting this vision of being a church that both gathers and scatters, there is potential to increase our diversity and accessibility.

Gathered Church

While we're not quite at the physically gathered worship stage yet, assuming all the necessary Risk Assessments are adopted and implemented as planned, **Felpham will open for individual, private prayer each Sunday from August 9th, 3-4pm.** This is very much a first step, but will enable the Managing Trustees and transition oversight team to begin to implement some of the necessary measures, as well as offering a safe space that those who are particularly anxious about going out might feel able to use as a first step for them too.

We also hope and pray this will offer a sign of witness to the community who will have seen the usually busy building largely empty for over 4 months.

The following measures will be in place:

- Social distancing
- One way system for entry and flow through the building
- Face coverings not mandatory, but recommended
- Hand gel
- Record of attendees for track and trace
- Please note **NO TOILET FACILITIES** will be available due to the renovations happening through August.
- Cleaning during and after.

Whether you are from Felpham, or not, all are very welcome to come to use the space for prayer.

Annual leave

I will go on Annual leave on Monday 10th and return on Monday 24th.

Other circuit colleagues will be available in my absence, but in the first instance if there are any pastoral or other needs that arise, alongside your pastoral visitor or communitiy connector you can contact:

- Bognor: Anita Hayward Tel:826425 or Debbie Dean Tel:870807
- Felpham: Jan Hall Tel:583557 or Lynne James Tel:586475
- Westergate: Jan Brooks-Kibble Tel:771196 or Debbie Dean Tel:870807

Worship on the Phone will continue and I'm grateful to Joyce Stroud who will host these services for us while I am on leave.

Finance & Giving

We continue to monitor the financial situations of our Methodist societies, as we have seen a significant drop in income due to the pausing of lettings, events and physically gathered worship. We know many of you have begun giving by Standing Order or are keeping collections to give at a later date.

At Bognor Regis our cash flow position is looking particularly challenging for the coming couple months, so if it is possible and you feel safe doing so, I invite you to consider setting up regular giving by standing order, or send a cheque by post to Treasurer: *Tony Poland, 22 Wyde Feld, Bognor Regis, PO21 3SH.*

Also for **Bognor Regis**, a message from Anita Hayward: *If you have a World Mission box which has not been emptied for a while or you like to make an annual gift to this fund could you please let me have it in the next few weeks. I will collect it from you if that helps.*

And finally, I'm please to say that my ordination date has come through. I will be ordained in London on 18th April 2021. More details to come in the Autumn.

May you know the assurance of God's love with you in the coming days,

In peace & hope,

Rev Dan

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

1 Corinthians 12:12, 27, NRSV
