

Nork with Burgh Heath Parish News and Updates - Thursday 7 May 2020

Dear Church Family Members and Parish Friends

Hoping you're all continuing to cope in these strange times and that this message finds you safe and well.

This email contains updates on several things:

- a) A message from Bishop Jo, who was due to be visiting the parish on Sunday (and now can't, but is providing the sermon for us via youtube for us all to enjoy as part of our online worship instead).
- b) A message from John Baxter, who - as will be explained below - I have been keeping in touch with
- c) Some information on events coming up in the rest of the month of May
- d) Some information on 'what next' for us in the parish, in the context of the Government announcements this week, and the Diocesan announcements which will follow and be linked to this

a) A message from Bishop Jo

I have had May 10th in my diary to visit the parish of Nork with Burgh Heath for so long... and am just so sorry that I cannot come and share worship and coffee with you in person that day. But I do still plan to preach and join your online worship that morning... and shall encourage Alex to fix another date that suits you in the months ahead.

I'm delighted to hear of all that you're doing despite lockdown, thanks to YouTube and Zoom and such like. Never ever – even during the persecution of the Emperor Nero! - have our churches had to remain closed for Easter. Yet it's always been true that the risen Christ is not prevented by locked doors – and through these unusual circumstances it seems that many people are seeking God. It has always been true to my own experience of life that when a door is closed, God opens a window... and certainly it seems God is at work during our pandemic in remarkable ways. I hope and pray that is true in Nork and Burgh Heath as also elsewhere in our diocese and nation. This is a time when as Christians we become distinctive for the hope we know that overcomes fear. Let's transform the government's instruction into a prayer to God: 'Stay home, protect the NHS, save lives'...

We will invite Bishop Jo to our parish on another occasion, at some point in the future, when it is possible to do so again.

b) A message from John Baxter

Several weeks ago now, I wrote in the parish news updates of needing to pray for John Baxter's school & all those who are involved in as they had been struggling hugely with the recent crisis. There are no back-up systems in The Gambia, as there are in the UK to help

those who lose jobs or have no food to eat and not much guidance on how to manage coronavirus or the ability to socially distance.

At the last PCC meeting (back at the beginning of March) we had agreed, as part of reviewing the mission giving of the parish, that a gift of £10,000 would be allocated to the school in recognition of John's marvellous work at St. Paul's for more than two years of the interregnum before I was appointed as Vicar.

I am delighted to say that we have been able to transfer this money straight to the charity to help preserve the school's future and therefore all the children's futures (in terms of the opportunities the school offers them), as well as the staff's jobs going forward.

This money has been given from mission giving from across the parish, which had been reserved for this purpose over the last few years. During the PCC meeting in March, we also selected mission partners and other causes to receive financial gifts, from the suggestions made by those who wrote mission partner proposal forms. (Thank you all of those people! If it were not for the events which have overtaken us this year, I would have been in touch about this - and will be when the opportunity arises).

We had been going to announce the decisions at the annual APCM, which then got put on hold due to the pandemic - until September or October (I await instructions from the diocese) – and still plan to announce all of the other exciting causes we will be supporting as a parish, but I wanted to share what we have been able to do for John and the charity - and also to share his lovely message for everyone in response.

John and Dorothy are doing well - and we are keeping in touch.

This is John's message:

Alex, I have had to wait until late this morning to reply to your news of the grant from "Nork with Burgh Heath" to enable me to draw breath and make a coherent reply! We are overwhelmed by the generosity shown to our charity and to the school in The Gambia. The monies will enable us to guarantee the payment of Teachers' salaries until at least the end of the year and help to reassure Richard and all at the school that the future is secure for them at least in the short term. More important is the knowledge for them that people in the UK are thinking of them and praying for them and the people of The Gambia.

We will of course keep you up to date on the on-going situation out there which I suspect will go on a good deal longer than our own situation.

Once again, on behalf of Richard and all at the school, please pass on our thanks, our best wishes to everyone in the Parish who are all in our prayers.

Please do keep praying for John, Dorothy, Richard, the school children, their families and the school staff.

c) Information on events during the rest of May

Attached, is the PDF of events and news for May, which I sent out last week. In particular, I would like to highlight the remaining zoom events for the rest of the month:

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| Sunday 10th May | 9 am Parish 'Said Worship', followed by coffee & chat | This is for everyone in the parish and is in addition (and different) to our worship@home sent out by email each week |
| Monday 11th May | 7.30 pm Prayer for Christian Aid Week | This is for anyone from across the parish, who would like to pray for the work of Christian Aid, as it is Christian Aid week this week (More information on how to give to this cause will follow, although sadly we will not be able to have our usual Christian Aid Quiz this year) |
| Sunday 17th May | 9 am Parish 'Said Worship', followed by coffee & chat | This is for everyone in the parish and is in addition (and different) to our worship@home sent out by email each week |
| Sunday 17th May | 10 am Worship for children & their special adults | This is particularly aimed at children (and their special adults) from either church - and is chiefly an opportunity for the children to see each other's faces, catch up and worship God together |
| Tuesday 19th May | 2 pm St. Paul's Prayer | This is for St. Paul's members, and will include an opportunity to catch up, share prayer needs, and then to follow the Church of England set prayers for the day |
| Thursday 21st May | 4 pm St. Mary's Prayer | This is for St. Mary's members, and will include an opportunity to catch up and then to share prayer needs and pray for them spontaneously, either silently or out loud |
| Sunday 24th May | 9 am Parish 'Said Worship', followed by coffee & chat | This is for everyone in the parish and is in addition (and different) to our worship@home sent out by email each week |
| Tuesday 26th May | 2 pm Parish Coffee & chat | For anyone in the parish who would appreciate the opportunity to meet with other church family members online and share news |
| Sunday 31st May | 9 am Parish 'Said Worship' (including a culmination to the Church of England 'Thy Kingdom Come Prayer | This is for everyone in the parish and is in addition (and different) to our worship@home sent out by email each week |

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| | Week'), followed by coffee & chat | |
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If you have already participated in an event, you will automatically be sent a link to continue with it the next time around (though you are under no obligation to do so). However if there is anything else/ new you would like to join in with, please do let me know (if you haven't already) by responding to this email.

The reason I need you to let me know is because there are materials which I send out for each meeting prior to the meeting so everyone has all that they need when they log on!

In particular I would like to draw your attention to the prayer meeting for Christian Aid on Monday evening at 7.30 pm, where we will spend approx 45-60 minutes praying for Christian Aid, to mark the beginning of Christian Aid week. Please do let me know if you would like to attend.

d) 'What next' for our parish

With the Government announcements about 'what next' for the UK and for each of us in the next phase of coping with the Coronavirus Global Pandemic, I know that many of you are also wondering what will be next for each of you personally and for the parish. Please do let's be praying for each other in what is, for some, another unsettling week amongst so many unsettling days and weeks recently.

With regards to what will happen next in our parish, we will follow whatever directions are given by the Diocese of Guildford (several times a week there are 'clergy briefings' with updates on things which we need to do), which will follow the advice of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York - which will follow the advice of the Government!

Basically, I hope to be able to write something more next week, when I know it myself! However, I am anticipating we will be remaining 'online' (at least in the main) for a while yet.

As always, please do stay in touch with news or needs, I would always love to hear from you: by email or by ringing 07312 113019

With love and prayers,
Alex

Rev Alex Williams
Vicar
Parish of Nork with Burgh Heath

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