

Nork with Burgh Heath Parish News and Updates - Thursday 2 July 2020

Dear Church Family Members and Parish Friends,

The contents of this email is also available to watch in video form here: https://youtu.be/GfakaBtPX_g

Hoping very much you are all staying well and gradually enjoying more and more freedoms, as the country continues to emerge from Lockdown.

Thank you, so much for the messages, cards and flowers which have continued to arrive at the Vicarage - even since my email last week. You have all been so very generous to Michael and I, since we announced our engagement - and we are both very grateful.

For those who have been asking, we hope to be married on the 18th July in a very quiet service for 13 immediate family members only.

When it is possible to gather properly, we would love to celebrate with our wider family & friends - in the parish and beyond - (which realistically is likely to be in 2021, when we can have a proper party!). This is what we would have hoped to do all along, but coronavirus means it will be a bit more of a wait until this is possible.

After the wedding on the 18th July, we will have a 7 day 'homiemoon' at the Vicarage (we can't go anywhere easily at the moment!). Please do let us 'hide out' that week - though we will love to see you at any other time, we need to get used to being married for a bit first!

Thank you all again for your loving care at this exciting time.

Now, moving on to the main reason for contacting you all today:

The Plan for the Churches Re-opening:

Thank you to the 70 or so of you who so kindly spent time either filling out the survey about the churches re-opening, or spoke to me on the telephone or emailed your thoughts.

The Wardens, Standing Committee members and I have been working together on a plan for re-opening the churches, which has also been agreed with our PCC who added some further thoughts, which were incorporated into the plans.

Attached to this email is an outline of events in the parish for the next two months (July and August), which shows a mix of proposed activities on Zoom and also in the two churches. A few additional Zoom initiatives are yet to be added in, as they are under discussion with the various people who will lead them.

All of the 'in church' activities are subject to continued Government and Church of England advice - and also to any local spikes which could occur. For example, in Leicestershire currently there is a localised lockdown due to the local R rate going above 1 - which could happen in any area at any time. Under such circumstances, we would need to re-plan and I would keep in contact with you about this. Weekly news emails and updates will continue (with letters or phone calls to those not on the internet at times of particular news), as they have done since the start of the pandemic.

We are aware that, for some of you - who would like to be back at church already, our staged plan to get us safely back into the buildings may seem very slow. Yet, for others of you - who are concerned and do not feel confident to come back to church until there is a vaccine for the virus, it will seem too fast.

We have tried to take a sensible & measured approach, which gives us time to make sure that everyone is kept as safe as possible during this period. Worship will continue to be provided online throughout July and August. Any activities in the churches will be in addition to this.

There are multiple risk assessments and safety actions which are being put in place - and further safety regulations and procedures which are to be followed for any of the steps outlined.

We also need to be aware that, even if the plan goes as we hope and we are able to open the churches again for services in August, they will - for some while - be in a very different format to what we have previously been used to. For example, services will have to be:

- A much smaller number of people (and therefore on a booking system or something similar)
- Socially distanced
- Currently with no singing
- Currently with no responses said loudly (!)
- Currently no children's toys/ play items are allowed to be used (we hope that this may develop by August but are not sure)

... And so on (there is a lot more!)

Our gradual process gives gives time for the Government and Church of England guidelines on this to evolve further (we hope) and also for us to plan meaningful worship using what we CAN do well.

As we continue forwards together - and eventually start to gather together in appropriate ways - I would like to remind all of us to be mindful of each other at this time.

Every one of us has had a different experience of this Global Pandemic. For many in our Church family, lockdown has provided space to have time which we usually wouldn't - and even, if we live with others, to enjoy family life a little more. For others it has been isolating. People living on their own have struggled with several months of not seeing others in any way other than virtually.

For those of us who are key workers, it has been incredibly busy and we have had times of utter exhaustion... and for yet more of us, we have lost family members or friends during this time - possibly from coronavirus, or also from other causes... and have not been able to go through a usual grief process.

Yet more of us have been ill ourselves with the virus and/ or not been able to have usual hospital check-ups and appointments when we have been ill with other needs.

I could go on.

All of our lives have been changed through this time - and continue to be so.

As your Vicar, I have the unique privilege of having an overview of where you all (or at least most of you) are at.

Along with the Wardens and the PCC, I also hold a unique responsibility for you all before God - and in relation to church family life.

We have been in a Global Pandemic - and still are, despite the encouraging progress the NHS and the Government have been making in attempting to get this virus under control.

Every Vicar across the land is trying to make (with others) good decisions for the churches they serve - and these will be different community by community, according to our particular circumstances.

I therefore ask for your patience and support as we continue to journey onwards through these strange and challenging times - trying to keep everyone pastorally and spiritually provided for; as well as safe and well.

As always, please do be in touch if you would like to chat about any of the contents of this message or the attached timetable.

Love and prayers,
Alex
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Rev Alex Williams
Vicar
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