

Nork with Burgh Heath Parish News and Updates – Thursday 11 March 2021a

Dear Church Family Members and Parish Friends,

Hoping you're all well.

This is the first of two news emails coming out today! This one will update specifically on the plans for the re-opening of our churches and the other events which are happening in our parish in the coming months.

The other, also coming out later today, will update on all the other news of this week.

Plans for our parish for the coming months

The PCC met on Monday evening this week, and we are delighted to be able to let you know that from Easter Day we will be re-opening our churches - with a service at 9 am at St. Paul's and a service at 11 am at St. Mary's (both of which will be available by Zoom as well, for those who are not able to or do not feel ready to return). The plan is for the churches to then remain open for Sundays, but also Zooming, from then.

We made the decision, back at the beginning of January, to close our churches to most people - live streaming on Zoom from them on alternate weeks, due to the national lockdown, the very high infection rates in our local area and the many folk in our church family who are elderly, vulnerable or both.

Now that the Government has published the plans for emerging from lockdown 3, the infection rate nationally and locally is much lower, and many in our church family have received their first vaccine, we had decided that it is the right time (from Easter day) to open again for Sunday services - with all the safety measures in place: socially distanced 2 metres apart in household groups, wearing masks, hand sanitisation and no singing (plus quite a few other things behind the scenes, but this gives you the basics!) *In the event of any backwards step - emergence of new variants, local infection rates rising again... anything similar in the coming months we could need to review this again... but we are in a good position to be ready for any eventuality should this arise!*

This is wonderful in many ways - our churches being open makes them more available for those in the community who may wish to join us and gives the option for those who wish to be there in person to do so.

This is also sad in some ways, because we have come to love being together as both churches, but one family - and most days one or even several of you mention this as something you have been enjoying in the last year, such is the joy which getting to know and love each other has given us all.

Therefore, in addition to opening the churches, we are putting in place the following to help us continue to grow in our love and fellowship with one another across the whole family:

1. From April, once a month, usually on the fourth Sunday of the month, we will have a joint parish service at 10 am instead of the 9 am and 11 am services in either church. Initially these will be via Zoom - livestreamed from the churches (taking it in turns as we have been). Eventually, when it is safe to do so, we will move into doing this together in person.
2. We will be continuing to put on a range of Zoom events, which are open to everyone in the church family (from both churches) - and indeed, to anyone else who wishes to join us. In the coming months (dates attached in a PDF which you can print out) these will include:
 - * Running the Bible Society's Bible Course - building on having run the prayer course. This is an 8 week course and will be on Tuesday evenings again at 7.45 pm, commencing Tuesday 13th April (*A sign up link for this will be sent out next week*)
 - * Running the Prayer Course a second time for those who would have liked to join in but couldn't on a Tuesday evening. This will be on Wednesday mornings, at 11 am, commencing on Wednesday 24th March. (*A sign up link will be sent out for this next week*)
 - * Continuing our parish prayer meetings (approximately fortnightly, but depending a little on the Vicar's diary)
 - * On Tuesday 23rd March (a year since the first day of the first national lockdown), we will be holding 2 identical reflective events at 2 pm and 8 pm on Zoom to give anyone who wishes the opportunity to pray and reflect on the losses of the last year - and also to give thanks to God for His faithfulness and provision through this time
 - * Our next parish APCM (annual parish council meeting) will be on Monday 19th April, on Zoom, where we will celebrate God's goodness to us and the progress in our parish in the last year
 - * During Holy Week (commencing 28th March) a range of Zoom & Youtube services will happen throughout the week - please see the dates overviews
 - * We are working to provide other one-off events for the parish - some details still being confirmed!
3. We are in the process of joining together & reforming our online presence. Thanks to Michael, we now have a parish facebook page, a parish youtube channel - and we are working on (but it is a huge task) a parish website. (More information about these will be in the other vicar updates from today)
4. Over the next few months we plan to put together (when we have sought permission and checked details with everyone) a parish directory. So many of you would like to contact each other to send good wishes, share news etc, having got to know each other and this will make it so much simpler for everyone to do so. Please be patient with us, but we hope that we will be able to publish this in May.
5. Gradually, when it is possible to do so, we hope to resurrect the parish walking group (we did manage one walk between the lockdowns!) - and there are other possible shared group opportunities in the pipelines as we move forward together. I am so looking forward to sharing more in coming weeks... but have a lot to write today!

I hope this makes you feel as excited as I do. One of the greatest joys (despite the many challenges) of the last year, for me as Vicar, has been the way we have grown together so

much during this time, which has been truly beautiful to behold. Now we can build on this further - and open ourselves out to invite more people to come and join us as well.

Please do take a read of the two PDF attachments (provided this way to be easily printable):

- a) A list of key dates for events plans in the coming months, as known at the moment - more may be added to this over time
- b) A week by week schedule of the events in the parish until the first week of May

Love and prayers,
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