



Autumn News

from Revd Ruth and everyone at
St. Peter and St. Paul's Aylesford

Dear

I hope this finds you safe and well.

I'm writing again because I'm aware that keeping in touch, via the internet, as many of us can, is not possible or easy for you.

Although we've been 'locked down' there has still been quite a lot happening around church, and on top of that, government and church guidance, advice, rules and regulations - whatever they call them - seem to change daily, which keeps us busy keeping up with them!

During lockdown, we were also busy holding a Sunday morning service every week by Zoom (Zoom is computer software that enables online meetings), and we had around 50 people attending each time. This way of meeting enabled us to be more flexible with the liturgy and music, and people really enjoyed the variety. Altogether, we met like this for just over four months.

However, as you may be aware, we're now able to meet again in

church, so I thought I'd tell you about that.



Our first time back was a service of Holy Communion, held at 10am on Sunday 26th July. I recorded it and you can see the service on YouTube. The link is: <https://youtu.be/Wyxaye3owlQ> If you'd like to watch it, maybe someone could show it to you on their mobile phone or tablet?

We had worked out that church would hold about 35 people, sitting 2m apart, and by the time of the service, the C of E had decided that we must all wear masks! So you can imagine how surreal that was! Fortunately they quickly exempted the service leaders from masks, so at least those who rely on lip reading are now a bit more comfortable (and it's better for me ... trying to read the Eucharistic Prayer with my glasses steaming up was not great 😊).

The first service back was called 'Returning and Remembering'. We gave thanks for our return to the building, but we also recognised the very mixed feelings we had - ranging from joy at being back, through anxiety about the virus and all the precautions necessary, sadness at leaving the good things of the last few months behind, and of course, the grief and loss that some people have experienced.

We also acknowledged the things we had learned during lockdown - as a church we'd been freed from routines that had become unthinking and automatic for many of us, and we'd responded to unknown, new and sometimes wondrous things. Most of all we had come to understand, more deeply, that the church is not the building - the church is us. We're the living stones as we read in 1 Peter 2.1-10.

We recognised that we must 're-member' our church; in other words, re-create, re-make, re-new, as we combine the new things we've learned with the good things of our tradition.

This was what I said in the sermon that day:

“Despite the challenges of the virus, we have communicated more effectively than ever with many people and we have created vibrant and close-knit communities online for services and other things. We have prayed – day in, day out – holding the life of our community before God, and we have left the building behind as we have set up a food table in the RBL village, where we have discovered hungry people living amongst us, but also compassion and kindness living around us. In many, many ways we have felt more connected to God and to each other.”

All this is true, and yet I was well aware as I said it, and remain aware now, that feeling connected has not been your experience, if you have been home alone, without any of the technology that has enabled connection with others.



Janet (Holdstock) and I have talked about this a few times, and it's difficult to know what would help you the most, but we do want to help, especially now, when the whole world seems to be changing again - moving on and moving out, and yet there are those who are not ready for that yet, and maybe won't be for a while. We're also well aware of the possibility of a second lot of restrictions in order to curb the recent rise in infections, and that increases anxiety as everyone fears another lockdown.

What would help you?

What can we do to make you feel more connected to your church family?

I know that Janet and/or one of the team of phone callers will have been in touch with you, but what else can we do? We

recognise how worried you might feel, as it looks like life might not be back to anything like normal for a good while.

What would help you?

Please phone Janet (01622 710083) or me (01622 717434) and let us know.



Back at Church ...

we acted on our resolve to combine the good things of lockdown with church life and since 9th August we have been running Zoom in church, so around 20-25 people each week, are able to attend through Zoom, as well as the 35 or so physically in church.

If you can possibly join us, either in church or via Zoom, please do. Maybe a friend or neighbour could help you to Zoom, and you'll be surprised at who you recognise!

The details of how to join are in the regular enewsletter. If you'd like a paper copy of it, just let Janet, me or the person phoning you know.

Please note that if you'd like to come to church, you need to book a place by calling Aline (07771 636872).

If coming at 10am seems a bit crowded for you, maybe you could come at 8am on the 2nd or 5th Sundays in the month.

The Food Table

A little more about the food table that we've set up in the RBL village: The idea is that



people donate food, which we take to the 'Food for Thought' foodbank in Maidstone (who help families in Aylesford), but hungry people can help themselves, from the table, when they need to. We have been surprised to discover hungry and desperate people living in Aylesford. So far the food table has been under a gazebo, but we now have permission from RBLI to put up a shed, which will help us manage the whole thing better. We have been very fortunate to be given a free shed and this week, we heard that we had been awarded a £500 grant from TMBC!

And talking about money ...

Obviously the income of the church has dropped, and we've had to work hard to prevent a serious situation developing. Again, we've tried new things ... a Zoom quiz raised £300 and the *pièce de résistance* - an Auction of Promises - raised £1100! Thank you to you if you have contributed to church income in any way.

Phone Support

If you are not receiving a regular phone call from a member of the church, and would like to, please call Janet 01622 710083

or me 01622 717434 and we will put you in touch with someone who will keep in contact with you.

If you're feeling sad or lonely, or know someone who is, you can phone 01622 939020 (local rate call) and hear me reading some 'Words of Comfort' - prayers and Bible passages.

What would Jesus say?

What would Jesus want us to know at a time of such uncertainty?

He would want us to remember the depth of his love for us, and knowing that, trust him enough to share *all* our worries with him.

Cast all your anxiety on him
because he cares for you.
1 Peter 5.7

He would want us to know that there is one way, and one way only, to find true peace, and that is to put our life in his hands.

Peace I leave with you; my
peace I give you.
I do not give to
you as the world
gives. Do not let
your hearts be
troubled and do
not be afraid.
John 14.27



And knowing that such peace - peace beyond all understanding - is what we find in him, he would want us not to worry.

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

Matthew 6.26

If, despite all this we find it hard to be at peace, he would want us to focus on the needs of others. Every one of us can do something to lift the spirits of someone else - just a conversation on the phone or a few words in a note.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” And “Love your neighbour as yourself.” There is no commandment greater than these.

Mark 12.30-31

I hope these reminders of God's love for us, every moment of every day, help you, especially if you're feeling low.

Pastoral Visits

I'm sorry that pastoral and care/sheltered home visits are still not straightforward, but be assured that Janet and I keep

our eye on all the guidance and as soon as visits are possible we will be in touch.

Prayer

We continued with morning and evening prayer every weekday for weeks during lockdown, but we've now returned to morning prayer only, as the world gets a bit busier again. However, this essential half an hour every weekday means that we underpin the life of our church with prayer for the world and for every aspect of church and community life, including you.

I hope that the knowledge that you are held in the love and prayers of your church, continues to bring you strength, comfort and peace through these challenging days.

God bless you,



Revd Ruth Peet
01622 717434
The Vicarage
Vicarage Close
Aylesford
ME20 7BB