

Letter to WSAM churches

14th May 2020

Dear Friends

Greetings for another week - which is quite like the last few weeks, but maybe with a bit of light at the end of the tunnel, albeit it's a very long tunnel... I hope you are all staying well. As time goes on I am hearing many voices over the phone, and also seeing some faces online. Gradually the number of those faces - those of our community fortunate enough to have both the technology and the ability to use it - is creeping up, which is great. But I am very aware that it will never include the whole of our church families, and I really want to stress that nobody is being forgotten. As we hold Elders Meetings we are trying to prioritise issues of pastoral care, and share news and concerns. You are all being held in thought and in prayer.

Please consider...

We need to make the most of new (and until recently quite unexpected) opportunities that have arisen, as well as trying hard to include everyone as far as we possibly can. The lockdown has made some forms of inclusion more difficult - those without computers were previously as able to get to church as those with them; but now they are unable to take part in things which happen online. At the same time, some of those who, because of various disabilities or other circumstances, were previously unable to attend worship, now find that the online options have increased exponentially. It is possible to connect to worship of any style at any time from the comfort of your own home, provided you have a computer, tablet or smartphone. This is a huge change and has been very rapid. Nor is it necessarily temporary, as increasing congregations online look likely to be a continuing feature of the church, even when our buildings are back in use for those who can get to them. The Pulborough congregation has been enjoying social meetings a couple of times a week via 'Zoom', which are now involving well over half their members and friends. So my question is this, should we (and I am including all three churches in this) be looking at some form of online worship, despite the huge disadvantage of not being able to include the members of our fellowships who don't have the necessary equipment or know-how? Or should we make Zoom social meetings more widely available? There is also, of course, the possibility of small groups getting together online for prayer or Bible study. But none of these options are open to the whole of our church families. Please let me know how you feel about this, because I'm afraid we are still several months (at least) away from being able to return to our buildings, which won't happen until it is really safe to do so.

Which brings me to a very brief reminder that our income has inevitably dropped massively, with no lettings of our buildings, or fundraising, possible at the moment; but

many of our outgoings remain the same. Please remember your giving to the church is essential to our life and work - any of our treasurers would be happy to discuss this.

News

A message from Heather that Douglas's funeral will take place at 1pm on Friday

Please keep Dave and Irene and their family in your prayers, along with others in our care homes.

Very good news from Liz and Mike, who have just become grandparents for the first time with the birth of a granddaughter. All doing well. Congratulations to them and the whole family!

A date for your diary if you are one of those able to worship online. A Zoom Synod Service, to include Communion, is being prepared for Sunday 7th June at 10.30am. More information later, but the letter came with the offer of help for anyone struggling to use Zoom; so if that's you, have a word with me and I'll pass you the contact details.

You may have seen that the Pope has suggested that this Sunday should be marked by prayer for those affected by the Coronavirus. I have no details, but I'm sure we're all doing this.

God Bless you all - you are in my thoughts and prayers, and I look forward to meeting and worshipping again in person when we can do so without endangering anyone in our communities.

Anne Lewitt