

Revd G.M.Daw
Tel: 01273 473665

The Rectory,
14 Lockitt Way
Kingston near Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 3LG

Dear Friends,

31st December 2020

I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on 2020 and to look ahead to 2021.

The one word you cannot use about the year 2020 is “normal”. After the General Election of 2019 swept Boris Johnson and the Conservatives into power, with the promise of getting Brexit done it seemed a new way forward was emerging. Then the shock, horror, and tragedy of COVID-19 came, and our world has been turned upside down. The things we accepted as the way we live were having to be challenged and new restrictive measures have meant a miserable year for many people, both physically, mentally, and spiritually.

However, behind the broad statements have been individual people whose lives have been affected in a very deep way. Although the cause may not have been COVID-19 how we were able to deal with it was deeply affected by the virus. Several of you have lost loved ones, some to old age, some to cancer and some to other illnesses. What you can do to help that passing was hampered by the tight rules on what you could do and how you were able to say goodbye.

My mother-in-law died in April and only six of us could attend her funeral. She was in a care home, so we had not been able to visit her or see her, just talk on the phone to a confused 92 year old who did not understand what was happening.

However, it was Marcus 's death in October that shook me to the core. He had been holding the fort during my nearly three-year struggle with cancer. Stepping in to cover, visit, support and help many of you and me. His diagnosis of pancreatic cancer at the end of July came out of the blue, and then his rapid decline in health, and then death the day after the Archdeacon and I had seen him, is still with me. He and I were quite different in temperament, but we just hit it off and became close friends as well as work colleagues. I still think what would Marcus have said or done in a given situation? I miss him immensely.

His departure leaves a huge gap in our Church life. Nevertheless, I am incredibly grateful to the Revd Mary Sitwell, the churchwardens and many of you who have worked to keep things going in exceedingly difficult circumstances. Christmas was as special as it could be in the circumstances and the Archdeacons support in taking services over this holy period was much appreciated.

The weekly services and readings which I have prepared have helped me stay in touch and I hope been a source of spiritual comfort to those of you who have been restricted in what you can do. The thought that we are doing worship and praying together spiritually is a comfort to me and I hope to you.

The future.....

Firstly, let me update you on my health. I have been given four rounds of chemo normally two weeks apart, and so far have not suffered too many side effects (apart from loss of most of my hair!!). My cancer markers continue to come down. The current plan is to have a CT Scan and then decide what next, more chemo or further surgery. My frustration is that if there was no virus I feel well enough to be out and doing things and taking services, but because the chemo lowers your immune system I have had to shield and stay indoors - very frustrating!! The upside is that apart from the kitchen our four bedroomed Rectory has been decorated by me from top to bottom- and although I say it myself, I think I have done a reasonable job!!

What will be the future in our Benefice of four churches, Iford, Kingston, Rodmell and Southease?

Worship Services

Clearly, we will have to slightly alter the service pattern as it will eventually I hope be me back in harness. I will talk to churchwardens about this I do not anticipate a major change.

Daily Prayer

One of the things I have missed personally is saying the Daily Office across the benefice with several of you. Indeed Sue Maddan, who died earlier this year and I were coming up to our thirtieth anniversary of saying in Evening Prayer in Kingston church three times a week. I hope to begin that again.

Community Life

I have been extremely impressed by the way you have kept community life going and cared for and supported each other through this difficult year. I hope we can develop this area, and perhaps find new ways of being Church.

Working together

In March of 2020 we prepared and PCCs adopted a “Looking to the Future” document, (which is attached to this letter), although the detail may have to change the principles, I think are still valid.

I want to finish by wishing you all a safe, but better 2021 and thank you for your prayers and support as we have sought to be faithful to God during this difficult year.

With my best wishes

Yours as ever

Geoff

APPENDIX

IFORD with KINGSTON, RODMELL and SOUTHEASE

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

More Open

Agree a statement of belief and practice which is open and welcoming

Each parish look afresh at how we welcome newcomers to the village

- Welcome leaflet
- Parish Magazine

Increase inter-parish communication

- Look at Parish magazine content
- develop use of social media including the national Church-near-you website.

Find ways to use the festivals of Christmas, Easter, Harvest Thanksgiving and Remembrance Day

To look at our relationship with Iford and Kingston CE School and see how that might develop.

More converted to Jesus Christ

A deeper spirituality which sees using our church buildings as hubs of prayer:

- each church continue to be open throughout daylight hours

To ensure there are resources in each church to help people

- prayercards
- booklets for prayer requests,
- leaflets to be taken away -What is our faith about?

Review our Service pattern so that it meets the needs of the faithful regulars and also communicates to those on the fringes of faith

To look at Daily Prayer in our churches and produce a leaflet for people to use at home.

To develop follow-up for baptisms, weddings and funerals

- Baptisms – invite families to the following Mothering Day service
- Marriages – invite to hear their names read out in church on their first anniversary.
- Funerals -use the third and fourth Sundays of November to have special Services of Remembrance and read the names of those whose funerals have taken place in the past year. And invite their families to attend.

Find ways to explore the Christian faith in the 21st century, study groups, Lent groups etc.

More generous

Parish Giving Scheme becomes the norm for regular worshippers to give to the church

Making financial needs known to people in our parishes, the cost of ministry and the cost of maintaining our medieval church buildings.

More engaged

Continue our support of Foodbanks in Lewes and Newhaven

Continue to support Sussex Historic Churches Ride and Stride

At our 5th Sunday United Services we will continue to support one of the poorest countries in the world Malawi, through the Malawi Association of Christian Support (MACS). MACS provides support to locally decided initiatives for health and education projects in Malawi.

Each parish to continue to put on social and fund raising events which engage with their local community.

Prepared after consultation with each Parochial Church Council (PCC).

The Revd Geoff Daw

Rector of Iford with Kingston, Rodmell and Southease

March 2020

