

Hello to you all.

We have just passed the longest day of the year, and the best thing about this time of year for me is the long, light evenings. The annual rhythms are reassuring, but this has also felt like the longest year in history. So much turmoil in our everyday lives that it has been a struggle to keep up. This is where there is comfort in resting in the knowledge that God never changes. God is the one person we can look to and know that, whatever else is going on in the world, or in our lives, ultimately we are in God's hands.

I wonder how you are all doing individually. As lockdown restrictions lift there is more freedom for many of us, but this is not without some risk as Covid-19 has not disappeared. I am concerned however for the wellbeing of those who are still not able to mix in society due to their vulnerability, which hasn't changed. It has been incredibly isolating these past few months for all of us, but there will be many for whom nothing has changed and they cannot leave their house. Let's all be aware of them, and not leave them behind.

Our Churches are open for private prayer, and each Church has its own arrangements depending on ability to adhere to the regulations. I am thrilled that we are able to enter the buildings again, and welcome you all back.

The strange thing during lockdown has been how much we have come to realise that we have taken our Church buildings for granted. I am as guilty as anyone for often having said, "The Church is the people of God, not the building". But in these past few months of restriction, a renewed appreciation has developed in many folk for our Church buildings. It is no secret that Churches are places of profound peace, but what is less known to many folk is the feeling that is experienced, when you take time to sit in a Church; the feeling of the weight of the years of prayer and spirituality that has been absorbed into the very fabric and stones of the building; you really do feel Gods presence in a way that is hard to put into words.

In the Church we have Sacraments, and a Sacrament is something that is an ordinary everyday thing that takes on Spiritual significance when it is set apart for God. So ordinary things like, bread, wine, water and oil become symbolic of something sacred. We all have things at home that have tremendous value to us, and which take on a significance far greater than the item itself because they have been given to us by someone we care greatly about. For example, a simple cup given or received as a gift comes to represent times spent over a cup of tea chatting with a treasured friend and so the cup becomes almost sacred; it's not that the cup is anything particularly special, it is what it represents. This is what happens with our Church buildings. They have been standing open in our communities for 100's of years and they represent the prayers and lives of the people all throughout those years, with all the history that has gone with them, and they stand as a Spiritual presence which holds a far greater significance than the Stones and mortar that hold them together. They are Sacred, and one can find great peace and encouragement after time spent in them.

Whether we are in Church or not God hears our prayers always, and that is a huge comfort to know. God bless you all,

With love Rev Sue.

***Deut 33.27 “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”***