

Letter for April 21 Newsletter from Revd Sheila Swarbrick

Dear friends,

It is now over a year since the government declared the first national lockdown and public worship was banned. In that time as society has adapted and changed with differing rules so we have as a community, resuming worship in our church buildings with restrictions when we could while also providing prepared worship material. I realise that I have not written to you all for many months. Indeed, looking at my computer I only found a newsletter for April and May 20 and reading those reminded me how little I understood then what the consequences of a global pandemic could be.

As a parish we have much to be thankful for and we will reflect on some of that during our Annual Parish meeting on Wednesday 14th April at 4pm. Sadly this needs again to take place via the internet and telephone. Our pattern of services will continue with one service of Holy Communion each Sunday, 1st & 3rd 10.30am at St Stephen's, 2nd 8am at St Pancras & 4th 9.30am at St Olave's. When there is a 5th Sunday – 30 May – we change and will go to St Martin's at 10.30am. The midweek communion is moving to Thursdays at noon beginning on 8th April. We will have two each month. Keith will prepare service material each Sunday but there will only be material for a morning service when there is not a 10.30am one and a zoom discussion will be offered.

Looking further ahead we will have a display about Christian Aid in St Stephen's in May and a music and readings on Thursday 13 May at 1pm in aid of Christian Aid. Then from Thursday 3rd to Sunday 5th June St Stephen's church will host the Lockdown Quilt exhibition in aid of Refuge charity. We hope to have some concerts in July for our church funds and to allow other groups to book the church for charity events, but we wait to see what is allowed.

Though there has been much sadness, loss and suffering in this past year and there is uncertainty ahead as we come to celebrate Easter once more may you know the presence and the peace of God with you and be renewed and refreshed by God. I close with a prayer that encourages us in our Christian life and which I will use as the post communion prayer for our Easter Sunday morning service. This year we are in St Martin's as we wait for the repaired ceiling to be painted.

Servant Christ,
help us to follow you out of the dark tomb,
to share daily your resurrection life,
to be renewed daily in your image of love,
to be used daily as your new Body
in your service to the world.

Servant Christ, help us to follow you. *(India, Litany of the Disciples of Christ the Servant)*

With love and prayers for you all

Sheila R Swarbrick