June 2020

Dear Friends,

In her sermon on Pentecost Sunday, Rev Jane Kraft talked about change. As we emerge from the current Covid-19 crisis, she said, ‘in many ways life will be different from the way it was before. They are calling it the new normal.’

Change can inspire both fear and excitement, depending on how we view the change in question, and how confident we feel about adjusting to it.

The Covid lockdown was forced upon us, but we have seen individuals and companies responding in many creative ways: factories re-purposed to produce ventilators, home-made masks and other PPE, neighbours shopping for those who are self-isolating, and clergy learning new skills in broadcasting technology!

Other spin-offs include reduced pollution from traffic, industry and air travel, nature has had a brief respite from some harmful human activities, and people re-connecting with God and/or with church in new ways.

So what could the ‘new normal’ be like for us as individuals, as a local church, as a country, and globally? Jane observed in her sermon that in the Bible, ‘whenever God’s Spirit acts, things change’. If we hoist our sails to the wind of the Holy Spirit, where might he drive us? What kind of ‘new normal’ would we like to create?

I would like to invite all of us to reflect on the past few months, and to listen to God as we pray about how life might be in the near, medium and more distant future. One area that desperately needs change is our stewardship of the environment. As a church we can do practical things like using more eco-friendly cleaning products, and keeping areas of the churchyard free for wildlife (see pages 3-5). But we also need to change some of our thinking, e.g. about walking or cycling instead of driving, switching to electric vehicles, considering the environmental impact of our lifestyle and travel.
Our Sunday live-streamed worship services have reached people who wouldn’t otherwise have attended church. How can we use technology in the future to reach those who still won’t be able to get to our church building for whatever reason, or people who find it hard to attend a house group because of childcare or other issues?

The lockdown prompted us to set up regular pastoral contact with people by phone. It would be great if we can make pastoral care for all members of our church community part of the ‘new normal’ – and extend this to neighbours and the wider community in our town.

With change comes challenge. We may have to let go of some things in order to embrace others. Jon Toohey’s article (page 6) explains how our income has been severely hit by the lockdown. St Paul, reflecting on his own experiences of shortage and of plenty told the Philippians that ‘my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus’ (Philippians 4:19).

The PCC would love to hear from everyone reading this about your experiences of the Covid lockdown, and about your hopes and worries for the future. Please reflect, pray and discuss with others how God might be leading us to carry out his mission as we respond to changes in the world and seek to create a ‘new normal’ that will reflect the values of God’s kingdom. Please send your comments to me, the churchwardens or another PCC member, or comment on my blog www.stmichaels-sandhurst.org.uk/rev-john-castles-blog.

Let’s face the future with hope and with confidence in our God whose love is unending and whose resources are infinite.

With every blessing,

John
Rev John Castle
rector@stmichaels-sandhurst.org.uk
Tel: 01252 872168