

**Wednesday 15th July 2020 Swithun, Bishop of Winchester, 862**

Dear Friends

St Swithun’s Day has arrived and it is raining!

The tradition dates from a great storm that is believed to have followed, contrary to his wishes, the removal of Swithun’s remains from the churchyard into Winchester cathedral. 40 days of rain ensued… If it weren’t for this tradition, Swithun would probably be ignored today, for very little is known of his ministry. It’s almost as if the tradition arose as a means by which to remember him.

Traditions will arise, I am sure, as a result of the COVID19 pandemic. You may have begun some of your own at home. They might be little changes like always telephoning a particular relative or friend on a particular day. In years to come it will be interesting to see which traditions outlast the virus; perhaps we will become so accustomed to wearing face coverings in public that it will become difficult not to…this might prove especially true of the very young.

One tradition that is now returning is worship in church. I’m delighted to be able to share with you the news that worship in All Saints and St Godwald’s will resume during August. The arrangements are as follows:

Sunday 2 August – All Saints, 10.30am (‘Friendship Sunday’)

Sunday 16th August – St Godwald’s, 10.30am (Dedication Festival for St Godwald’s)

These services will also be broadcast on zoom and there will be zoom services on the other Sundays in August too. Both services will be non-Eucharistic. Communion will return in September and details of the September service plan will be released next month.

Worship in church will be different for the time being. Social distancing – 2 metres - must be maintained and you will need to sit as directed by the sidespeople/stewards and either on your own or in your own household ‘bubble’. There will be no singing, no refreshments and no access to toilets. Hand sanitiser must be used as you enter and leave the church. Contact details will be taken of all worshippers for ‘track and trace’.

One of the challenges we face in our planning is not knowing how many people are going to wish to return to worshipping in church straight away. Due to social distancing there is a maximum capacity in each church – 27 in St Godwald’s and 34 in All Saints. There is a possibility that we could exceed our capacity and the thought of turning someone away on these grounds is unthinkable.

So, to make this as straightforward as possible, here are some simple guidelines:

1. We would like to give priority please to members of the congregation who do not have internet access. If you currently enjoy the zoom services online through your computer please continue with this for the present.
2. Although the two congregations are very keen to worship together more frequently, during August please only attend worship at your usual church.
3. If you know you will definitely be attending worship in church, it would be helpful to know in advance so that we have some sense of the numbers involved. It is not essential to tell us but it will help us to know if we are heading towards capacity.

At the moment it is unclear whether face coverings will become mandatory in church. St Godwald’s DCC however has decided to assume that this will become the case. So, if attending church at St Godwald’s you must bring a face covering with you. (We hope to have some spares on hand should you forget).

Both churches will continue to be open for private prayer – All Saints on Mondays and Thursdays (11am-1pm) and St Godwald’s on Tuesdays and Fridays (2-4pm).

The prospect of returning to church is exciting and positive – but it will feel different. Indeed, it may prove to be something of a test of our faith. Let’s begin preparing now by praying for courage and grace as we look forward to worshipping together once more.

May this week reveal to you afresh, the depth of God’s love for you:

with my continuing love and prayers,

David Ford, Rector

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