

Sunday 12th October

Harvest Festival

Dear Friends

Our harvest festivals today were thoughtful and joyous occasions, if slightly different to previous years. Sincere apologies for the 'zoom' problems we had; that particular problem shouldn't recur (which isn't to say that others won't!).

On behalf of us all, huge thanks to everyone who has worked so hard to re-imagine the first of our special autumn services for this COVID age in which we live. And thank you for all your harvest gifts which will be so appreciated by those in need.

This coming week letters will be going out to all our bereaved families of 2020 inviting them to one of our Thanksgiving and Remembrance Services around All Souls Day. The services this year will take place as follows:

St Godwald's: **Sunday, 1st November at 3pm** and again on **Tuesday 3rd November at 3pm**

All Saints: **Sunday, 1st November at 5pm** and again on **Monday 2nd November at 12noon**

Please do join us at one of these services, and please let me know if you are able to help in any way – stewarding, reading, lighting candles etc.

From now until 20th December, we are joined in the parish by Dean Hall from Tardebigge, who is training at Queens' in Birmingham to become a Licensed Lay Minister (Reader). Please look out for Dean, and I know you will make him very welcome.

As we all contemplate a winter under COVID constraints of one kind or another (and who knows what might have been announced by the time you read this!), it is even more important than it was during the warmer Spring and Summer, to keep in touch with one another, encourage one another and pray for one another too.

But in addition to all that, I think we can learn from one another as well. Have you developed a new routine to your daily life that others might like to hear about? A particular approach to prayer perhaps, or devotional reading of one kind or another? Perhaps you've taken up or rediscovered an old hobby?

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Is there a TV series you love watching that you might like to 'review' or discuss with others? I'm pretty eclectic when it comes to television and am enjoying immensely the new 'All Creatures Great and Small', 'Strictly' and the fast-moving drama 'Life'. Even knowing who else is watching 'with you' can bring encouragement and solace. Winter may prove to be a long one for all of us – so there is plenty of opportunity to share through our newsletters or start new zoom groups online. Have a think, chat to one another, make suggestions....

With the return into church for worship I know that many have appreciated being able to receive communion again. I am equally aware however, that for those who cannot leave their homes safely for whatever reason, the return to worship in church runs the risk of emphasising a separation amongst us that none of us would wish.

Building on an initiative I've come across elsewhere, I would therefore like to introduce the idea this autumn and winter of 'doorstep communion'. The idea is simple – using a very brief 5-minute version of the communion service, I literally bring the reserved sacrament to your doorstep (or to your garage/porch/garden shed etc.). Do get in touch if you would like this. It is intended only for those who cannot leave their homes safely to come to church, and especially for those who are also not on 'zoom'.

One final piece of good news to leave you with, is about the Anglican Youth Project, recently renamed 'Reach Out Bromsgrove'. Reach Out Bromsgrove works with disengaged young people around Bromsgrove, listening to them and signposting them to different agencies or creating activities that they would like to engage with – music in particular. It is a detached project which means it doesn't have a physical base from which it operates. To see what we have done recently take a look at our video here:

<https://vimeo.com/408328831/9dadf7cafc>

The good news is that the PCC has been awarded just over £9,000 from the National Lottery to develop some aspects of this work. It might not sound a huge amount of money, but this project is incredibly cost effective and the stimulus of this grant is going to help shape the work over the coming years. It is fantastic that the churches in Bromsgrove – in partnership with the local authority 'Community Safety Partnership' team – can help bring encouragement, hope and life to some young people who are feeling very isolated and excluded from day to day community. Please add the project to your prayers.

As always, this comes with my love, prayers and God's blessing:

David Ford, Rector