



Dear friends

Rector's Reflections on the Euro final and the "Freedom Day".

It is almost the end of July. What a month we have had; from the European Championship Final in Football to the weather on Wednesday, where we had hail, rain, and sun all in a matter of a few minutes. We like to be in control of things that we are involved in, and we feel safer when we have got plans for the future. But then we are always reminded of the truth that we never are in full control of things, and we cannot predict what is around the corner.

God knows this. He understands this. So, when he was looking for a way to get his message to us that he loves us more than we can ever imagine, that we are his children and he is our Father, he decided to come down to this earth as one of us and build relationships with us. He could have produced a manual or plan for our salvation, a checklist, or to-do list that we should follow and that would have been the most perfect plan that ever existed. But that was not the way of God. His way was simply to walk with us as a fellow human being, going through the same frustrations, pains, and challenges of our lives. This ultimately cost his very life when he was nailed on that cross. God knew all this and yet it was the way he chose so we could know who he is, who we are, and how much he loves us, and how precious we are to him no matter what others might say about us.

I think there have been a lot of mixed emotions in the last few weeks. The excitement of the Euro final and the bitterness afterwards. The expectation and hype for the so called, "Freedom Day" and the confusion and frustration that followed. Things didn't go as planned, or as we hoped. And yet we found something much more important than a plan or even a success.

I was very struck by all the encouraging messages for those young footballers who were abused online after the Euro final. Every time I pass the church, I am stunned and humbled by the ribbons of prayers that are tied to the churchyard railings. Hundreds and hundreds of ribbons are tied to the railings of our churchyard. Each of them represents a prayer of a person: a mum, a dad, a grandparent, a child, a son, a daughter, or a family. It has been five weeks since we introduced this Ribbons of Prayer project, thanks to Susie's fantastic idea. We now have 840 ribbons tied to the railings and we think it will easily reach beyond 1,000 when we conclude this

project on the seventh week.

I remember the day when Susie and I together put the posters up for this project and tied the ribbons to the railings. We started with just two ribbons. I wonder if this was what the disciples experienced when a boy came up with just 2 fishes and 5 loaves of bread and they had thousands of people who were hungry. They brought them to Jesus to bless. then they started sharing them with each other in thankfulness and in faith until they realized that everyone was satisfied and there was some more left.

Friends, we may never have full control of outcomes. Plans may disappoint us. But if we could still remain faithful and thankful, if we could still share what we have got with each other in kindness and love, then we will gain something that is imperishable, and more precious than anything success, or a victory, can ever bring. There are many teams that have won the Euro title. We don't actually remember all of them, or how many times they have won. But the way people of this country encouraged and blessed their young men when they were down will be remembered for a very long time, with its strong and profound message for the generations to come that we chose to love and care for each other, regardless of the outcome of our plan. Our small actions of kindness and faith do matter. Those actions may seem small, and may have an effect on only one person, but to God, that means the world. Because he was more than willing to give up his life for that one person, for you and for me.

Draft of plan for moving forward after 19 July

As announced last Sunday, we have drafted a plan for us to move forward following the PM's announcement regarding the relaxations of the social distancing measures. Leading up to the discussion for this plan with the leaders of the church, I had informal conversations with various members of the community, not just the church. I quickly realised that it is a matter where so many different views coexist from one end of the spectrum to the other. Some were very keen on moving as fast as we can, and some were very cautious. We have prayed and reflected very hard and tried to discern together how God wants us to act in these uncertain times. There was no easy solution. But one thing became very clear to us, which is, that more important than the speed or the pace that we will be moving at, is that we want to move together. If we could stay united, looking out for each other, supporting, and praying for each other, that will be the true witness to the mission of Christ for this world.

There is no doubt that we will overcome this virus. The question is, who will we have become

through this crisis? We want to be more prayerful, more trusting, more faithful, and more united when this is all over. When we look back over this time, we hope that we can say, we may not have got everything right because things were so uncertain, but at least we kept supporting each other and loving each other. Wouldn't that be one of the greatest stories that we could ever pass on to our next generation? So, this draft plan is developed bearing in mind that we want to move forward together. For some, this will mean that it may not feel like we are moving fast enough or slow enough. This will also mean that we will need to be flexible as the situation will continue to change. So, we will continue to review this plan with you. Because at the end of the day, the plan is here to help us to make our church more welcoming and more missional in these challenging times.

Context Government Advice & Church of England Guidance

We note the Health Secretary's statement in the House of Commons this afternoon and the Prime Minister's press conference this evening confirming plans to move towards the next stage of the Government's roadmap on July 19 while urging caution in response to rising cases of Covid-19 propelled by the Delta variant.

COVID levels (per100,000) for week to 5th July

Northampton 136 $r=1.4$ National 261

Current arrangements

Congregation wear masks

Congregation social distancing of 2 metres – numbers limited to 50

Choir numbers restricted to 6

No congregation singing

Booking with attendance register - Temperature check

One way system

Stepped removal of actions

Stage 1 (from 1 Aug up to 4 weeks)* depending on the situation

1. If there was less than 24 hours gap then sanitising to be practiced.
2. Limit of numbers increased to 60
3. Congregation singing permitted with masks
4. Weekly Choir Practice to be reintroduced
5. Choir number increased to 10

6. Temperature no longer checked on entry
7. Masks still advised to be worn.

Stage 2 (from 29th August)

8. Limit of numbers increased to 75
9. Enhanced ventilation still to be practiced
10. Booking no longer required*
11. Sanitising still to be practiced
12. Monthly weekday service may resume
13. Quiet congregation singing permitted without masks
14. Social distancing of 1 metre* (marks on the pews to be introduced)
15. No restriction on choir numbers*
16. Tower room to be offered for pre-school children and parents
17. Choir vestry to be offered for Junior Church
18. One way system to be removed (but the orderly manner of entry and exit to be maintained)

Stage 3 (to be reviewed mid- September)

19. No restrictions on congregational numbers
20. Celebration at high altar
21. No limit to congregation numbers
22. Reintroduce servers
23. Family services reintroduced
24. Weekly weekday services reintroduced
25. Congregation singing encouraged without masks *
26. Choir in vestry robe and procession
27. Congregation can socialise in church & coffee served

Stage 4

28. Cup reintroduced at communion for those who wish to receive*
 29. Administers of the Sacrament reintroduced
 30. Congregation to be assured to share peace with physical contact if they wish
- *as permitted by Government regulations

Event for Children and Families:

Marvellous Miracles, Monday 16 August at 10 am at the church rooms

Over the last 18 months or so, many children and parents missed the opportunity just to get together and have fun or chat. We are preparing an event at the church rooms for children and families on Monday 16 August at 10 am with the theme of marvellous miracles.

This will be a great occasion where children meet and have fun with friends, while experiencing those miracles described in the Bible in a really creative and fun way. It will also be a great time for parents to just relax and share with each other what has been going with you and your children. Please do put 16 August in your diary and let me know in advance if you are interested. We have a few families already booked in and we can have some more.

Welcoming the Revd. Rachel Hetherington as our Associate Priest

I am delighted to announce that Revd. Rachel, who is working at St. Christopher's, will be part of our team as our Associate Priest. Rachel previously served at St. David's in Kingsthorpe and has many experiences in ministry, especially in Chaplaincy. We look forward to meeting her and Alan, her husband, on 1 August when she will come to preach for us. Rachel will be licensed on Thursday 19 August at 7.00 pm on Zoom by Bishop John. Please do let me know if you would like to be present at her licensing. She will officiate at her first Eucharist on the Sunday 22 August.

Here is a little introduction from Rachel.

Hello! My name is Rachel Hetherington and I am delighted to have been offered the position of Associate Priest at St Peter and St Paul, Abington. I am looking forward to meeting you all and working alongside Revd Jun and the lay team.

Just a few weeks ago I started a new role as Independent Living Administrator at St Christopher's Care Home, after 9 years of ministry in the parish of Kingsthorpe, where I had special responsibility for St David's Church. I enjoyed my time as their Vicar, however, it is now time to move to 'pastures' new and take up a different expression of ordained ministry working with older people and the wonderful hard working staff at St Christopher's.

I have been a regular visitor to the home for many years and have served as a trustee for nearly



two years which has given me a good insight and understanding of the St Christopher's community.

Music Recitals during Summer

I am pleased to announce that our Summer Music Recitals will begin, with caution. Music has been one of the blessings that we appreciated so much, especially during the lockdowns. I am very grateful to Tim and the choir, and all the musicians, who shared their gifts with us and kept our spirit uplifted in those challenging times. I am sure you feel the same way. Please find the message from Tim below.

After a pause brought about by the Coronavirus, we are pleased to announce that we will be bringing live music recitals back to Abington. Our first recital will take place on Sunday 22nd August at 3.00pm. There will be no interval – just 45 minutes of beautiful singing for you to enjoy safely.

The programme will feature a watery theme and will include the song cycle "Sea Pictures" by Edward Elgar. His setting of maritime texts followed closely on the heels of the success of the Enigma Variations and displays an equally delightful melodic richness. We shall also feature "Songs of the Sea", a cycle of five songs composed by Charles Villiers Stanford to poems by Henry Newbolt. The programme will be completed by Kurt Weill's "O Captain, my captain" Rachmaninov's "Spring Waters" and a watery surprise on the organ!

Admission is free. We just ask those who are able to make a donation towards church funds.

There will be appropriate distancing between household/support bubbles. A one-way system will be in place and hand sanitiser will be available. Abington Church ask that masks are worn by all audience members, unless for health reasons they are unable to. We take our responsibility in preventing any possible transmission of Covid-19 seriously and believe that by doing everything we can in this regard, we increase our chances of being able to go ahead with live music in the future.

Please rest assured that, despite the necessary measures, you will receive a very warm welcome and we hope for your support bringing live music back to the community.

Sunday 22nd August at 3 pm

"Music of the Waters" including:

Elgar: Sea Pictures

Stanford: Songs of the Sea

Hilary Dolan – Mezzo Soprano

David Chambers – Baritone

Tim Dolan – Piano

Sunday 12th September at 3 pm

Organ recital by Tim Dolan

Sunday 31st October at 3 pm

Abington Church choir, Watling Singers, Faure Requiem

*a liturgical performance for All Souls tide Accompanied by the Abington String Orchestra

Abington Church Mothers' Union Update



After 17 months of not being able to meet in person, 13 members of Abington MU met at the Parish Rooms on a very hot afternoon in July. How wonderful it was to see each other and to enjoy a time of fellowship. Then on 9th August a few members will join with other Deanery MU friends at a service at St Mark's church in Whitehills. It is 100 years since Mary Sumner, the founder of Mothers' Union, died and so it will be good that we can meet and celebrate her life and the work of this wonderful Christian movement.

Abington MU are next meeting at the Rooms on Monday 20th September at 2 pm. We are planning to have a bring and buy stall to raise valuable funds for MU, which helps individuals, families and communities in this country and around the world. If you have anything you would like to donate, or indeed would like to come along to this meeting, we would love to hear from you. New members are always welcome.

From Sue Harrison, Claire Tharby and Cathy Tinsley

The Caretaker Committee of Abington Church Mothers' Union

Ride and Stride: Saturday 11 September

Abington Church will participate in the annual Ride and Stride event on Saturday 11th September in support of the Northamptonshire Historic Churches Trust. Nearer the time we will be asking for a few volunteers to act as stewards to welcome people visiting the church. Please put this date in your diaries if interested and let Cathy know if you are able to help with stewarding the event. In the past there have been a few of our church family who liked to either cycle or walk to some of the participating churches and chapels to raise money for the NHCT, and also for our own church. The sponsor form is attached to this email.

If anyone has any questions about this event, please don't hesitate to contact Cathy for more information at cathytinsley18@gmail.com.

News from Food bank

The food bank run jointly by St Alban's Church and Broadmead Community Church has continued throughout the Covid pandemic. Obviously, the procedures had to change in line with restrictions and it has only been possible to see those attending in the car park instead of in the church.

We hope to be able to resume the 'drop-in' in the next few weeks and be able to invite everyone into the church for the usual coffee and chat mornings. The number of people attending does vary but in recent weeks we have been supplying food and toiletry packages for around 40 people each week. This is only possible due to the very generous donations received, not least from members of the congregation at Abington.

Many people bring their donations to our house but if it is more convenient there is a box in the Sidesman's Corner in the Church, labelled for donations. This box is emptied regularly. The last 18 months have been very difficult for very many people. We have certainly seen an increase in the numbers attending the food bank and we assume this will continue for some time to come.

Please continue to pray for all who find it necessary to attend food banks and thank you all for your constant support and donations.

Malc and Jill Ward

Junior Church

Our Junior Church gathers every last Sunday of the month during this summer season. We gather outside, weather permitting. The next Junior Church will be on Sunday 29 August at 10 am. Please let Cathy know in advance so that she can welcome you and your children! cathytinsley18@gmail.com



Outdoor Service dates

5 September. 3 October (TBC). All dates are subject to weather conditions. If it rains, please assume that the service will be inside the church building.

New Upgrade with AV/Streaming System

The new system is great but not without issues, partly because we are still learning how to operate the new system. I am aware of some of the issues, such as: the sound for the online congregation is too quiet; the gap between the sound and image; the echo; and the size of the font for the screens in the chancel. I will look into these issues with our team. I think most of them can be solved by ourselves, but it will just take some time as the system is very different from what we are used to. We will need to do several trial runs, checking each issue stage by stage. I am assured that Hilltop Audio who installed the system will be able to help us if we need professional help.

If you have skills related to this, or if you are interested in helping us as part of the AV/Streaming team, then please do let me know.

Next Pastoral Letter

From the beginning of September we are bringing together the weekly Bulletin and the Rector's Pastoral letter into a monthly Parish Newsletter which will be sent out by email on the last Thursday of the month with paper copies available to be delivered to those unable to come to church and for visitors to the church. Items for the newsletter should be sent by 21st August to Matthew George abingtonbulletin@outlook.com

Here are the contents that we plan to include in the newsletter.

Rector's Pastoral Letter

Worship for September

This month's prayers and prayer topics

Readings, Readers and Intercessors for September

How we are managing COVID risk in Church

Junior Church

Choir and music

News from the Pastoral Team

Parish Activities and Events

News from St Christopher's

Mothers' Union

Fundraising

Abington Churchrooms

Rainbows, Brownies and Guides

Draft Minutes from the last PCC Meeting

How to get your information or event into the newsletter

Ministry Team

Information about coming to church

If you have any ideas or suggestions about the contents of the newsletter, or if you are willing to help with this, please do get in touch with Bob at purser.bob@btinternet.com.

That is all from us this month. I hope you all continue to stay safe and have a lovely summer.

With love in Christ

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