

Dear Friends,

What was 'Freedom Day' for some and 'Fear Day' for others has now passed, and given the mixed feelings about the lifting of restrictions it seems sensible for us, as a church, to proceed with caution. The legal position has changed but this does not mean that our confidence is in the same place as the law. For example, we are now allowed to share wine at the Lord's Supper but my sense is that many will not want to exercise this freedom and it may be unwise for us, as a church, to even offer the cup as an option. As a result, at least over the summer, our church services will continue with many of the protocols to which we have become accustomed: social distancing and hand sanitiser etc. The main difference is that we can now sing (which is really no more dangerous than talking) and face masks will be optional. I hope these small changes reflect caution but also positive steps towards a more normal church experience. As we look to the future there are three areas that the PCC began to discuss at its last meeting, on Tuesday, and that I would like each of you to consider: Holy Communion, Bibles, and Digital Presence. **If you have any feedback or ideas in these areas, please do get in touch with me.**

1) Holy Communion

Although we can now legally share the cup at communion, the PCC was of the view that this would be unwise. It is nearly 18 months since we have been able to participate corporately in communion in both kinds. The two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual realities and were given to us by the Lord Jesus as tangible and physical symbols to build up our faith in him corporately. In a very real sense, church is not church without communion. It seems important that we are able to share in communion in a safe and sustainable way. To this end we are going to borrow a set of communion glasses from Emmanuel Chapel and trial using individual cups. Some may argue that this is not an Anglican way of sharing communion and to change our practice in this way would affect our Anglican polity. I am not persuaded that this is the case and there is currently a debate taking place over this issue. If you are interested in the debate you can follow this link:

<https://www.lawandreligionuk.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/200812-The-legality-of-the-use-of-individual-cups-for-communion-wine.pdf>

2) Bibles

As part of the road back to normality, we have returned the Bibles and song books to their respective chairs and pews. As we did this we noticed that the Bibles are a bit tatty but also out of date. The edition of the Bible we use is the NIV 1984, but this was revised in 2011, which means that the church Bibles can no longer be purchased or even easily accessed on the internet (which means it is not as easy as simply replacing the irreparable Bibles). As we continue to open up now would seem as good a time as any to replace our church Bibles for newer editions. We could buy 200 new Bibles for £7-9 each (c.£1600), depending on the exact specification. Due to coronavirus the church is facing a significant deficit this financial year and it would be hard to justify making this purchase out of the general fund. If there is an appetite for replacing the Bibles I would suggest that individual people commit to buying a Bible for themselves and, perhaps, for one other person. If we have sufficient individual donations of £8, £16 or £24 we could very easily have new Bibles by the end of the summer. **Please get in touch with your thoughts and if there is sufficient appetite we can begin a formal appeal.**

3) Digital Presence

It is now clearer than ever that if we do not exist online we do not exist. Anyone who moves to our area and is looking for a church, or anyone who is considering the Christian faith will check us out

online long before they visit our buildings. This means our website, social media accounts, and digital presence in general, need to be up to date and professional. Our digital presence does not need to be complicated or slick but we do need to look competent. Given that our broadcast services are stopping, we have an opportunity to use some of the hardware we have acquired to produce some online content to raise our digital profile. It may be that we go back to broadcasting our services, although I am not persuaded this is the best or most creative way forward. We can certainly put our sermons online (not least to help those who are housebound) and we hope to continue partnering with Flame Radio, but it may be good to engage in other ways too. Some ideas that have been suggested include podcasts or producing short videos for Instagram or YouTube about the Christian faith, or our life and ministry as a parish. It seems appropriate that we have a break over the summer, partially to encourage people back to church, since church in front of YouTube is not really church, but also to give our tech teams a break. **Once we start the new term we have an opportunity to reengage in a fresh and innovative way so let me know what you think.**

Church life tends to get a bit quieter over the summer. I wish you all a restful and enjoyable summer. I pray that we would all spend some time resting in Jesus, and of course do pray for the Slater family as they prepare to leave Rock Ferry and move to Barnston.

With love in Jesus,

Chris