

**Wednesday 3rd June 2020 The Martyrs of Uganda 1885 and 1978**

Dear Friends

As of Monday just gone, the church is now in ‘ordinary’ time; the irony of which is surely not lost on any of us given the extra-ordinary times in which we live.

However, the liturgical term ‘ordinary’ doesn’t mean normal, common or everyday but relates to the numbering of Sundays. Ordinary Time is the longest season in the church’s calendar and is split into two parts – the first and very short period of ordinary time occurs between Candlemas (2 Feb) and Ash Wednesday. The second, and very long period of ordinary time, is from the day after Pentecost all the way through to the day before Advent.

With green as the liturgical colour for ordinary time and, in the northern hemisphere, the correlation between this time of year and better weather, many churches take the opportunity to focus worship themes on creation. This is also the season for outdoor services, church walks, pet services, fetes, BBQs and all the other church social events we enjoy at this time of year.

Though not in 2020.

Therein lies a rub for all of us. We’re enjoying fine weather but we’re unable to enjoy it and the company of one another in the ways to which we have become accustomed. This isn’t just a shame, it actually hurts. Our lives feel diminished. Opportunities are being lost, and they won’t come around again.

One only has to look at the Christians whose sacrifices we commemorate today – the Christian martyrs of Uganda across two centuries – to realise that our sacrifices during this pandemic do not come close to the sacrifices made by people of faith of previous ages. And although everyone is being affected by the economic recession towards which our nation seems destined, not everyone is affected equally. The poor, as usual, suffer disproportionately to everyone else.

But although our lives are different and remain constrained by the virus, there is still so much to be grateful for – so many blessings to count. Beginning everyday by recounting our blessings will surely help us to keep things in perspective and get through more difficult days together.

At the time of writing there is still **no news** about churches re-opening. I am expecting permission for private prayer to be given at some point during June and then worship at some point during July or August. But this is all very tentative and even when permission is granted time will be needed to put into place whatever conditions are laid down by the government or the church authorities.

Thank you to those early birds who have already returned their **questionnaires** regarding church life after COVID-19. Keep them coming in please – our church councils need as many people as possible to participate if the decisions we then make are to take everyone’s opinions into account.

The Britannia Hotel in Marlbrook is now being used as an **asylum centre** by the government under the management of SERCO. Churches Together in Bromsgrove and Bromsgrove & Redditch Welcomes Refugees are currently ascertaining the needs of our new residents which include single men and women and over 20 young families. We are hoping to put into place a scheme for making donations of clothes etc but please do not begin to collect items yet! Due to the virus and all our other commitments we are hoping to devise a method that is very need-specific and meets all the hygiene requirements too. More news will follow in future newsletters.

The funeral of Evelyn Davies will take place next Thursday – 11th June – at 1.15pm. Let me know if you would like a copy of the service in advance.

Go gently through these challenging days,

With my continuing love and prayers,

David Ford, Rector

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