

Friday 2nd October 2020

Dear Friends

Since I last wrote to you all, quite a lot has happened!

Liz and I have had a lovely break in Derbyshire, returning refreshed and hopefully prepared for the autumn. Thank you for all your good wishes. Immediately following that, Siobhan and Josh were married at All Saints – all in a little bit of a rush to beat the latest restrictions on numbers! Then earlier this week all the clergy in Worcester Diocese took part in a two-day online conference. This was supposed to be residential for the whole week but that obviously couldn't happen. I don't find long periods on zoom easy, but some aspects of the two days were very good.

The theme was 'Water in the Wilderness' and two of the speakers – Mark Oakley and Bishop Emma Ineson – prepared presentations in advance which are, when I checked this morning, still online.

Mark's is called 'Sea, Rain, River and Fountain: God, Words and the Journey of the Soul': <https://vimeo.com/456860055/937e3215d1>.

+Emma's is called 'Trinity-Shaped Ministry': <https://vimeo.com/452511844/40babdb7d1>.

Although prepared for a clergy conference I think many of you would enjoy listening to them.

Since I last wrote I have also received the latest parish share data showing contributions from churches throughout the Diocese up to the end of September. By the end of the third quarter of 2020 (that is 75% of the way through the year) All Saints had paid 55% of its share for the year and St Godwald's 26%. This compared with 46% for the Deanery as a whole and 43% for the Diocese as a whole.

With only weeks to go to the end of the year I would like to make a special appeal please for further specific personal donations towards our parish share.

/continued

As a reminder, 60% of parish share directly covers the cost of stipendiary clergy and their housing. Of the remaining 40%, 12% goes on the training of ordinands and curates; 3% goes to the wider church and the remainder covers the provision of support services for the parishes and church schools. Parish share is not spent on the costs of Bishops, our cathedral or invested for the future.

The Diocesan Board of Finance recognises that this is a very difficult year for parishes, and that is certainly true for us. Our hall incomes have disappeared, our fee income is much reduced and almost all our cash giving from services has gone too of course.

This means that we are more than ever dependent upon the sacrificial giving of those at the heart of our church community – and I know this means asking for more from the same few.

If we can manage 60% of our parish share this year, then we will have covered the direct costs of our clergy and I think that would be a terrific outcome. Can you help us bridge this gap?

Please have a think as to whether you could make an additional donation to either church in the coming weeks, specifically for parish share. If you can, very sincere thanks: please either pay your gift direct into the appropriate bank account or send a cheque to the parish office. Whichever you do, please mark it 'parish share'. If you can't contribute more at this time, please don't worry about that and please don't think you need to explain your situation to me or to anyone else. I give thanks in my prayers regularly for all the wonderful gifts of the people of our churches – and money is only one of those.

At the clergy conference, the writer David Runcorn (whose contributions are not yet online), offered a series of bible reflections, the first of which was based around Jesus' stilling of the storm. Amongst other insights, David noted how we think the main message of the story is that Jesus can control nature. David countered this by suggesting instead that the main message of the story is that Jesus was all set to sleep through the storm – in other words, he wasn't frightened by the challenge. As we continue to live amidst the storm of COVID and all its impacts, may we pray for a similar level of courage and trust in our divine Father, who, despite appearances sometimes, is ultimately always in control.

May your hearts and minds this day be filled with God's love and peace:

David Ford, Rector

01527 873831

revdavidford@googlemail.com