

SUNDAY 12TH JULY TRINITY 5

Thought for the Week: As the Church Buildings begin to open for Public Worship what does "a NEW Church for a NEW Society" Look Like post Lockdown?

With the decision during the week by the two PCCs that the Church Buildings are going to open over the coming weeks for Public Worship (Congresbury from the 12th July, Banwell from the 19th July) is it simply that "everything at last will be able to get back to normal?"

Well, one answer would be to give a true 'Anglican Churchy' style answer, "well in some ways yes, and in other ways no." And then the discussion may well move very quickly into what would the Church Guidelines and the new PCC Plan permit and what would it not permit – what would we be "allowed" to do, and what would we "not be allowed" to do.

But does this really take into account the enormity of the unprecedented times that so many have been through individually and the rest of us as a society? Many in our communities may simply be looking at "getting back to normal," but as Christians, especially as Christians who are engaging with the Holy Spirit in a meaningful way, we should also be looking to see how God is working in and through such times of pain, not just bringing healing, or even just restoration, but also transformation and 'new birth.'

As someone whose daughter is imminently expecting, 'new birth' is very much something physically on our minds right now as a family, but it also, has a very useful application here as a metaphor as we emerge as a Church community from this Lockdown especially if we think in terms of not just of what or who is being born but also about the impact and changes that this 'new life' has upon the parents and upon the rest of the family bringing about the potential for their 'new birth' also.

Let me explain what I mean.

Obviously, when a new person comes into the world, there is much care and attention given to this new bundle of life and joy that is now before you. "Are they alright?" "Who do they look like?" "What are their little unique identifying marks or characteristics?" Its all part of welcoming not just anyone but this new life into the midst of the rest of the family. So too, with us as a Church community as we emerge from Lockdown – during this time quite a number of new people have joined us from

many different places ‘online’ either via the Daily Blog, or the “Livestream” on Sunday, or both. Each person has a story, each person is valued and known by God by name. Each person matters. Each person needs to continue to feel included as much as they would like to be in the ‘family’ of the Church as we move forward.

And just like welcoming a new baby into the midst of a wider family, family life around the baby is both the same yet also profoundly different, and you can’t go back.

For this reason, the ‘new look’ Church will continue to “Livestream” the service on a Sunday morning as part of the the physical Church meeting, and we will do so at the same time, so as to maintain a connection both to those who maybe can’t, or don’t feel its quite yet right to come, physically to a Church building, but also for those who are new members who would like to keep going with the faith that they have renewed or discovered during this time.

But more than just ‘accommodating’ a new life, that new life so often renews and hopefully invigorates the rest of the family into new life too. Priorities change. Hopefully love, community, and all their associated values, come to the fore not just towards the new life but also within and through all the family as a whole: smiles are exchanged, ‘love is in the air,’ each member of the family looks out upon the world with a new softness, a new hope, a new sense of possibility in their eyes.

Call me sentimental, and the cynic would perhaps say, “it won’t last long,” but maybe its through a repeated pattern of “new beginnings” that we are all able to move forward both as a community and in our own hearts. The failure is not to try and to slip back; its not to respond to each “new beginning” with hope when it comes. We close ourselves off to the possibility of of change and refuse to let ourselves explore the adventure and the possibility it has to to lift our hearts and inspire us into being the people we may well have longed to become deep down; it would be like not letting the love of the ‘new life’ before us touch us, soften us, change us, which would be so sad.

So as a Church community, as well as new practical aspects of how we need to go about physical worship, the Guidelines and the Plan, which are noted elsewhere here in Pew News, in the Letter to Members that has gone out, and which is available on the Church website, it is important that we also seek to have a renewed sense of values and purpose as we move forward ourselves as a Church community.

The two PCCs, as part of the “Plan and Proposal post Lockdown,” would like to put forward four “Core Values” that we have adopted in our own working together and which we believe would best help and support us as a wider Church community at this time. They are:

- **The need for a Personal commitment to Prayer** – if we can pray then this opens us to so many gifts: humility, joy, comfort, compassion, forgiveness, generosity – all seen in the ‘mirror’ of our own lives from a God who first chose to love us. It is the most direct way to engage in the life of the Spirit.
- **Be Kind** – we are living in unprecedented times and there is also much hurt and indeed anger around. It is so easy to take things personally and to be hurt and/or to respond in like manner. ‘Being Kind’ is NOT an easy option, but it is a way to offer the world

something (and we would say the world ‘someone’) who thinks different – and given that this involved the Cross, “Be Kind” is actually likely to cost.

- **“There is no them, only US”** – we are two village Churches and as small communities we can get used to our own comforts and ways. But we have also been joined during this time by ‘others.’ In our own struggle of maintaining relationships with existing members (especially those who don’t have access to computers and social media) as best we can, it’s so easy to create a variety of distinctions of “them” and “us.” Overcoming this can be a REAL challenge – comparable to the Gentile community joining what was at first a community solely emerging out of a Jewish context. The Daily Blog reading for (7th July), which David Kemp kindly lead for us (Day 32), couldn’t be more appropriate:

Acts: 15:28-29:

²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

In other words, a “new normal” – no Purity Laws, no Sabbath Laws, no requirement of circumcision etc – simply a “new US” based around, not just abstinence, although that can seem at first how this text can read - but around Jesus, and being sensitive to the blessings that He can give: a new community which valued and took the culture and contextual needs of all its parts not only into ‘consideration’ but which saw diversity as something to be valued and embraced. We may not be Jews and Gentiles, but we have:

- Existing and potential new members
- Traditional worshippers and those who value contemporary worship
- Those who like physical worship, those who join us online
- Church and wider village
- Banwell and Congresbury
- Old and Young
- Clergy and Laity
- the list goes on.

The challenge, and the possibility, is to live by “there is no longer ‘them,’ only US”

- **We need to start slowly and build carefully, safely and steadily** – with patience and perseverance. This is not easy:
 - There will be those who wish to move ahead more rapidly, in the belief momentum is crucial
 - And there will be those who reminisce and hanker after “the good old days,” even if it is a return to Egypt.

Holding all these views and opinions together, not least around how people view and respond to change itself, will be a challenge, and need:

- Good communication
- Personal conversation
- Valuing of a variety of opinions
- And much compassion, grace, and, from time to time, humour.

And to that end we will do our best.

‘New birth’ is never easy. Even today it has much risk, considerable pain, and there can be many setbacks along the way as everyone has to explore what being ‘new’ means. But with these “Core Values,” and with the companionship of the Holy Spirit, much is possible.

I would like to thank Caz, our Youth Worker, for creating a new banner which we hope to display in some way in both our Churches.

Matt Thomson



Live Stream Church for Sunday: “NEW Church for a NEW Society – Two Churches as ONE - 10.30am

Following the decision of the two Church Councils to re-open the physical Church buildings for Public Worship, our first JOINT Church Service (physical AND online) will be “Livestreamed” this week from Congresbury, and next week from Banwell.



So please join us for a simple service that will seeks to include those at home as well as those who physically attend. The service will last approximately fifty minutes and be followed by a physical and ‘virtual’ social ‘catchup,’ as we have done ‘virtually’ (via Zoom) after quite a few Live Streamed services now.

(You can access the Service in the same usual way: via the “New Creation Facebook Page” either from Google: <https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches/> or via the New Creation website: <http://www.newcreationchurches.org.uk/>

(You DON'T need to have an account with Facebook to access any of this material.)

PLUS

From next week, we hope to make available the opportunity to “Share an AGAPE CELEBRATION” at Home for those who would like to. We hope, during the coming week to put resources together to make this possible so that you can download the Prayer that we have been using and so you can share this simple meal at Home, either after the Live Streamed Service, or at some point during the week.



So look out for details next week.

Look forward to seeing everyone on Sunday.

Matt Thomson

And afterwards, join us for the ‘Virtual’ Coffee Morning and catch up. Afterwards, why not join us for the next of our ‘virtual’ catch up? This week, Kirsty is hoping to have her camera available to join others who have physically joined us for worship and who will be gathering – socially distanced and weather permitting – outside the Church at the end of the service for a short time to catch up with one another.



See the “New Creation Facebook Page” for details of how to join.

Matt

“Weekly Interview – What does your week look like?”

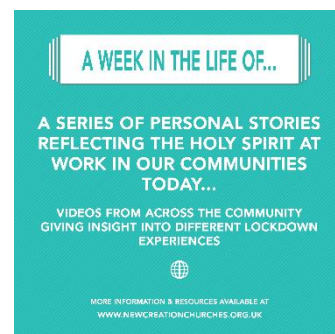
As part of our outworking of the life of the Holy Spirit in and through people’s lives, we have added a NEW addition to our weekly posts on the “New Creation Facebook Page” and “website” – a weekly “5 minute interview” with someone from the life of the Church trying to live out daily life in and with God.

To find these interviews: look up the “New Creation Facebook Page” from Google:

<https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches/> or via the New Creation website:
<http://www.newcreationchurches.org.uk/>

(You do NOT need to have an account with Facebook to access any of this material.)

Matt and Kirsty



Update on the opening of Church Buildings for Worship, Occasional Offices – the Church Buildings RE-OPENING for Public Worship as from 12th July in Congresbury and from the 19th July in Banwell:



Following meetings this week with both Church Councils the decision has been taken that we can safely offer physical Worship in both our Church Buildings as part of the wide range of ways we have sought to create of meeting with God during this time of Lockdown.

It may be that it does not feel the right time yet for you to engage in worship God in this way, but for those who would like to attend physical worship you and your family would be very welcome.

There is a NEW 10.30am Service, which will last for approximately fifty minutes and will have the option of receiving Holy Communion as part of it, for those who would like to. The Service will ALSO be “Livestreamed” so bringing the physical and the online communities together as a whole family.

Please see further details below: “What would coming to physical Worship look like?” and also, details about the “Live streaming” of Services.

THIS week (12th July), the Service will come from Congresbury.

NEXT week (19th July), the service will come from Banwell.

Please continue to pray for the whole Church community at this time. Thank you.

Matt Thomson

“What would coming to physical Worship look like?”

Here are a few brief highlights:

- People need to arrive and will need to be admitted by a Warden keeping two metres apart
- A 21 Day Register of those attending is required by Track and Trace.
- Sanitising gel etc will be available, although you will need to bring your own facemask if you wish to wear one (they are not compulsory).
- People will be directed to their seats and people are asked to seat in ‘households’ of one or more people, two meters apart.
- Paper Orders of Service are restricted, and so we will mainly be using the screen. However, a few large print copies of Orders of Service will be available for those who need them.
- Unfortunately, we are not permitted to share in congregational singing for the time being but there will be music in various forms as part of the service.
- Holy Communion will be a part of the Service but will be optional for those who wish to receive it. Communion will be in the form of Bread only at present.
- Children and young people are very much welcome at the service. However, the Children’s Corner itself in both Churches needs to be closed at the moment. If you

could bring some activity for your young person with you that would be very much appreciated.

- Although we are not able to offer refreshments, we hope to have ten minutes at the end of the service to be outside, socially distanced, in order to be able to socialise and catch up with one another each week (weather permitting).
- The service is expected to last for approximately fifty minutes, and we will be joined throughout by those Online.

There will be a copy of these details also on the website. Please also see the “Thought for the Week” section of New Creation Pew News for details of the values we hope to share as a Church as we emerge from Lockdown.

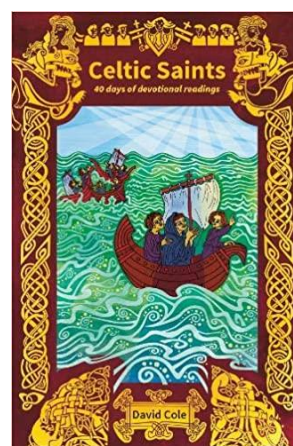
With thanks to the Wardens and others who have put in so much work to make this new addition to our worship life possible.

Matt Thomson

Daily Blog – the Next “Forty Days” – “Forty Days of Inspiration from the Celtic Saints” with David Cole:

As “40 Days with the Holy Spirit” draw to a close on Thursday, the Daily Blog will next turn to a new chapter in our journey of life and faith together, the inspiration we can draw from the lives of others, in this case the Celtic Saints.

Both our Church communities have well-known Celtic roots – Congresbury with St Congar and Banwell with St Patrick, and the lives of these men and women of faith are often enlightening, encouraging, and relevant to the lives we live today, especially as we too emerge into a NEW community and NEW Society.



As an inspiration, and to form the framework for the Blog, the team will be drawing on the work of David Cole (himself a member of the Community of St Hilda and St Aidan) who has shared a short biographical story of each saint, a Bible reading, and an application to everyday life for each day.

So, why not start on the next chapter of our journey together by following the Blog each day (each video is approximately five minutes) or by playing ‘catch up’ once or twice a week?

You can access the “Daily Blog” either by looking up the “New Creation Facebook Page” from Google: <https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches/> or via the New Creation website: <http://www.newcreationchurches.org.uk/> (You do NOT need to have an account with Facebook to access any of this material.)

Or you can purchase David Cole’s book for yourself from Eden or Amazon, or via Amazon Kindle.

Thank you to the Team for all their hard work.

Matt Thomson

Could you “give a Bible to a Yr6 young person” as they leave Primary School for Secondary Education?

Following the incredible response to the request for Bibles for Yr6 children at St Anne’s and St Andrew’s Schools where we have managed to cover raise enough to purchase a Bible for each child, our attention has now been drawn to trying to support the Yr6 children at Banwell school in a similar way.

Kirsty this week has been in consultation with the school and although we haven’t given similar gifts before, and Banwell School is not a ‘Church School’ as such, we enjoy a very warm relationship with the staff and children, and we wanted to extend the offer to these young people too.

So, if you have not yet been able to make a gift and would like to, please don’t feel it is too late. Please send in your gift to the same details Beth gave last week (see below) and Beth and Bob as Treasurers, who work so closely together anyway, will sort things out.

Please help us to keep going and to try and reach our aspiration that all young people this year, from all three of our school communities, will receive such a gift, if at all possible.

And thank you again. Everyone has all been so very kind.

Matt Thomson

N.B. If you would like to “give a Bible to a Yr6 young person” this is how you can do it:

Message from Beth:

“Anyone wishing to contribute toward the cost of Bibles for the school leavers (£10 per Bible) can do so in any of the following ways:

- Cash in an envelope, with your name on it please
- Cheque payable to “St Andrew Congresbury PCC”
- BACS:
 - Account name: St Andrew Congresbury PCC
 - Sort code: 60 23 32
 - Account number: 72280484
 - Reference: School Bibles

As long as we know who the donation is from, if you have a Gift Aid form on file with your Church, your donation will automatically be Gift Aided and the amount claimed added to the School Bibles fund.

Cash and cheques can either be sent/delivered to me (Beth Ashton-Hilton) at 14 Weetwood Road, Congresbury BS49 5BN, given to your Church @ Home coordinator to be relayed to me, or, if you have any questions or need any help – just contact Beth, Matt or Kirsty.

Thank you all so much for your continued prayers and fellowship – God Bless.