

Rector's Report to APCM November 2020

Current Situation and how we get through this

I think it is fair to say that 2019 was a challenging year for St Paul's. There were challenges before my time and then my arrival in April 2020, during a pandemic was not ideal for the church, or for me taking on this role. And we may feel frustrated that things cannot be how we might not want them. We may be frustrated that we cannot express our worship, our discipleship, and our evangelism in the ways that we would want to, we may be frustrated that we can't have our services exactly how they were, but perhaps through this we are seeing God doing something new.

We have established a great online presence, through our various acts of recorded and streamed worship. Normally this sort of positive engagement with the virtual world may have taken many months, or even a year or so to establish to this level. Yet through these acts of worship we have engaged with not only our regulars, but also with those who may not have a church to go to, or in some cases may have never been to church, or certainly not for many years.

Amazingly, we have managed to get St Paul's 10:30am service up and running again alongside maintaining the online presence, and although it may be a bit different, it is something we should be proud of. And even though our worship may not be as joyous, even though our fellowship may not be accessible and engaging, we are still here joining in the worship of heaven.

As well as starting up the 10:30am we have begun a monthly family service at 4pm, as our 10:30am is not able to cater in the same way for our children and young people.

Of course through this time we have also developed our partnership with St Barnabas, and although the very thought of this was difficult for some of us to understand, actually it has been a joy I think and also mutually beneficial. This bonding of our churches has led to another service - called Encounter - where we have a team from both churches sharing responsibility along with me. And this much needed space, even after just two services has seen to be of great significance.

It does look like things will be as they are now for some time, and we have to be ready to do our best to engage as best we can, recognising the limitations we have, but also the joy that we can experience as we allow ourselves to be creative in worship and mission.

I am sure that God has big plans for St Paul's, and at the right time these will be revealed to us, but in the meantime, during these challenging days we do need to keep praying, keep worshipping and keep caring for those around us. And I would say if you feel you are being missed out or need support then do please get in touch.

In this way we are being faithful, and that is what God asks. And as we are faithful to him, then he is faithful to us. Heb. 10.3 reminds us of this, "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful".

Let us be faithful, let us be hopeful and let us trust that God is in control and has a perfect plan for this church and each one of us here.

Paul Millard