Vicar’s Musings week 12

Having been privileged to be allowed to pray in church during lockdown, a privilege that did not sit easy with me when I knew so many of you wanted to come in and pray. It was incredibly moving and heart-warming being in church with others cleaning and tidying lights on and normal conversations going on and then to see the doors open again. Open Church doors are such an important visual sign of hope to the community. The reopening of our church buildings for private prayer has been far more complex than closing them ever was, I have tried to do so facing the challenge before us with grace and some common sense practicality. I am very grateful to those who offered their help to prepare both churches for private prayer.

Over the weeks I have become deeply concerned about the spiritual/ psychological and mental health effects of the pandemic on both our own congregations and the wider community. T has ford us out into a wilderness of unknowing. In a time of uncertainty and unknowing our churches are places of familiarity which is why opening both of our churches was important to me and I know also for you. Particularly because of the comments people have made and the conversations I have had outside church, many comments coming from people who don’t normally attend. Yes of course we all know we can worship and pray anytime, anyplace, and anywhere, but we must not underestimate the symbolic importance of our church as a beacon of Christian hope in the community.

I like many others had a growing frustration that more shops and cafes were being opened while churches have had to stay closed, it continues to be frustrating that the measures we have to put in place ie remove books and items that might be touched and put down again etc similar restrictions exist for bookshops and clothes shops whilst in supermarkets no such restrictions exist, I frequently pick products up to read the label’s and put back on shelves as do many others. I have learned to accept/live with these inconstancies as this is how life is and it will always be like that, all the pandemic has done is made us all more aware of them.

It is these frustrations that drain us spiritually we are all having to dig deep to ensure we stay positive and keep our faith active and strong, ‘*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.’ Hebrews 11 -1.* That is the Christian hope we have, the hope that keeps me going when I have moments of frustration and my dips as I said on Sunday- Christian hope is not the same thing as clueless optimism with no foundation. True hope is what sustains us through struggles and enables us to share joy and thanks in the good times. It is this hope that has sustained me through this pandemic based in the knowledge it will end, there will be a different life post pandemic, but there will be life, hope that the church will open, and the day will come when we will worship inside again.

Rev’d Fiona