

ST. JOHNS CHURCH DONISTHORPE

GRAPEVINE

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SERVICE IS A HUGE PART OF WHAT CHURCH IS.

As I sit here writing this article for the magazine, I am feeling more hopeful, as I begin to see signs of change around me. After several months, the lockdown is slowly, but surely, being reversed. Local businesses are re-opening, and people can see friends and family once again. The church buildings are re-opening, at present for private prayer, but hopefully very soon for public worship. Of course, things will not be the same as they were before. We are having to get used to a new normal in many areas of our lives and the church is no different. The services will look different because it is still necessary to maintain social distancing and hygiene measures, and some things like singing are still not allowed.

As I reflect on the church buildings re-opening, it brings it home to me, very strongly, that of course the church itself never closed. Yes, the buildings are important, sacred spaces where we can meet together as a church family, but church is so much more than that. We certainly didn't lock God up in the buildings for three months.

God's mission has continued because God, of course, is not, and never has been, constrained within the buildings. God is out there in his world, everywhere, in everything. So, we have been able to join in God's mission in serving our communities, and we have done that in many different ways. I have loved hearing the wonderful examples of how people have helped and served others, and every small act of service is helping to build God's Kingdom right here, right now. Every time we have phoned someone, delivered food, collected, and delivered, a prescription, prayed for someone, we have been engaging in God's mission and "doing church." For me one of the most amazing and precious things to come out of the lockdown is that community spirit, that Christian calling to truly embrace what it means to "love my neighbour."

Service is a hugely important part of what church is. Service to the whole community.

In serving others we mirror Jesus, who as it says in Matthew 20:28 "came not to be served but to serve." The story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 is very well known. Indeed, the phrase "good Samaritan" is a phrase that has become part of our everyday language, meaning a "charitable or helpful person." In this story we see a wonderful example of what serving others means.

As we move forward into our "new normal" let us continue to build on what we have started and continue to engage in and expand God's mission together. There is something, however small, some act of kindness, that each one of us can do, and together, step by step, we can make the world a better place, the sort of place that God longs for his world to be. God Bless

Wilma

CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH WORK ACROSS THE WOODFIELD TEAM CHURCHES.

A MESSAGE FROM CERIANN, OUR CHILDREN'S WORKER

With the current Global Situation with Coronavirus and the local lockdowns, you can be forgiven for thinking that all our normal activities for children and young people have stopped. This however is not the case!

We thought it important to keep in touch with our families where possible. So, with this in mind we have adapted and kept **Little Fishes toddler group and Youth group** going on Zoom at their usual times. Little Fishes has proven to be valuable for mums and dads to stay in contact and support each other as well as providing story time and sing-a-longs for the little ones while Youth has had a range of virtual activities from quizzes to scavenger hunts

We have also been active on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/woodfieldchurcheschildrenswork/>) with daily activity ideas for families and a **virtual Sunday school** each week. For **Ready Steady Stick** we had a pack that we emailed out to families so that they could still have activities for them to join in with.

If you have any children or young people that would be interested in joining in with any of our activities do not hesitate to contact me on woodfieldchildrenswork@gmail.com

What will be happening over the school summer holidays is hard to say right now as we don't know. We are hoping to do some Ready Steady Pop-Ups in August – there would be one at Donisthorpe in the 'real world'. We are exploring linking into an across the diocese holiday club as well in the 'virtual world'. Keep an eye out on the Facebook or on our website for evolving events.

RE-OPENING OUR CHURCH BUILDINGS

Since the last Grapevine, we are taking small steps towards re-opening the church building.

'Risk assessments galore'.

The church is open for private prayer between 10am and 4pm Tuesdays-Thursdays.

We can hold funeral services limited for now to 20 mourners.

As from 2nd August, we will be testing the water as regards Sunday worship services. Numbers attending will be limited to 30, with social distancing, sanitising and no singing being the main features of life for now. For August, we propose to hold 3 services each Sunday across the 8 churches of the Woodfield Team, so there will not be a service at every church every Sunday. All services will be at 10am. Please check the website to see what is happening. We are feeling our way ahead in this whole area.

Our **AUDIO SERVICES** will continue in August and can be accessed on the website. Not everyone will feel able to come back to church straightway as all need to assess what they feel is the risk to themselves. Watch this space.

ZOOM EVENING SERVICES

The June Zoom services both proved popular and an excuse for celebration.

About 60 people or more were logged on. It is a strange feeling as all these different faces look out from their little oblong but it means we can get together and pray together.

For one time together, we gave a special welcome to Our Team Vicar Revd Rick Tett. He had joined us just as Lockdown started so his welcome service wasn't up to scratch. We then promised him a good party but time was marching on with no sign of being able to party well. To compensate, we turned to Zoom and invited folk from his previous parishes to join us and give their good wishes and encouragement.

The next time of meeting marked anniversaries of ordinations: Vivien Elphick was marking 30 years since her ordination in Norwich cathedral and Barry Dryden 20 years since his ordination in Liverpool Cathedral. The photo shows Vivien looking rather younger!!

We were joined by Bishop Guli who shared thoughts of what it is like as a bishop to ordain ministers. Cake and drink was shared but only virtually. It was going to be a proper tea party but that went by the board. It was nevertheless a good celebration.



LOOKING BEYOND 'THE LOCAL'

It's been very easy in recent months to forget there is a world out there, as we have focused on the trials caused to us by Coronavirus. St John's supports **CSW** (formerly known as Christian Solidarity Worldwide) an organisation that is passionate about the right to freedom of religion or belief for all, regardless of what that may be, including none at all.

This right is given through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 18 that states:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

Sadly this right is not afforded to all.

CSW advocates on behalf of those to whom this right is not given and challenges and changes the laws, policies and procedures that allow these rights to be violated.

They operate in over 20 countries around the world across Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East to ensure these rights are available to all.

They rely on the support of volunteers and supporters to raise awareness among communities and petition those in authority who can effect change.

And there is still much to do, for example the Rohingya Muslims in Burma, the Uyghur Muslims in China, Christians in Cuba and Protestant Christians in Mexico.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also had impacted religious minorities around the world.

In Iran, this can be seen as positive with some prisoners let out of prison, but not set free from their sentences, to reduce the risk of the disease spreading through the prison population.

Conversely in Mexico, the effect is a negative one where Protestant Christians have had water supplies cut off, as punishment for not conforming to the majority Roman Catholic tradition, leaving them vulnerable to infection as the message is routinely given to ensure hands are washed regularly.

We may feel that as individuals we are unable to effect change but that is not the case. Every single action has an effect and when you add all the individual actions together we can have a huge effect. So, every single action you take, whether it be a prayer, donating, writing to someone affected or signing a petition, will make a difference. Every action you take, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, will make a difference to someone. More information can be found on the CSW website at www.csw.org.uk or by contacting Adam Cheetham at cheethamadam@talktalk.net

REFLECTION: BLACK LIVES MATTER v ALL LIVES MATTER.

For some time now I've been thinking about, praying about, wondering about, what our world might be like if we were just a bit kinder to each other, if we could be more tolerant and accepting of others.

George Floyd's death, George Floyd's killing, saddened and appalled me as much as I guess it must have done to all decent people.

Maybe because I don't come into contact with people of colour on a daily basis; maybe because I don't experience racial tensions in my daily life except at the distance of a TV programme or news report; my initial knee jerk response to the shout - BLACK LIVES MATTER was simply ALL LIVES MATTER.

It made me feel better about the situation, it made me feel comfortable, cocooned in my little world. Not prejudiced, not discriminatory, not part of the problem.

But when I gave it more thought, I felt my ALL LIVES MATTER response to be a bit glib, sanctimonious, convenient and the easy way out.



So I did some more reading on the internet and was impressed by this from a lady called Gloria Cotton who is a Senior Partner in 'inQuest' - a firm of recognized thought leaders, senior strategists, and business people who are passionate about diversity, equity & inclusion.

This week, a leader in one of my Diversity & Inclusion classes asked me what I think about the Black Lives Matter movement, don't I think it's "racist" and fostering Black Supremacy and, "Why can't they just say, 'All lives matter?'."



Here's how I responded to the leader's questions:

Thank you for keeping it real. All of what we're saying means nothing if you can't apply it to your real world and begin to consider that while we all live on the same planet, we all live in different worlds.

I agree with you, All lives matter.

It seems, however, that in America, there is a comma at the end of that sentence, not a period. And the experiential, dog-whistle reality is that the sentence goes like this—for real, "All lives matter, comma, except ."

What comes after the unspoken but very real "except" are people and dimensions of diversity that are not welcomed, valued, respected, heard, supported by many people in America. What's real is that in America, "All lives matter, WHEN/IF you're part of that majority, those people with power."

In America, all lives matter, EXCEPT:

- *people who are Black, Brown, Yellow or Red*
- *people who are any religion or belief system that's not an acceptable denomination of Christianity*
- *people who have a mental disability*
- *people who are not thin and viewed as "physically fit"*
- *people who are under 38 years of age*
- *adult people who are not married*
- *adult people who are married, but to someone of the same gender, etc.*

To answer your other questions:

- *do I think it's "racist?" No. It's inclusive of all people of all races.*
- *and fostering Black Supremacy? No. It's about equity and opportunity for all people.*
- *and, "Why can't they just say, 'All lives matter?'" I can say it now and mean it. But, I'll have to keep addressing the "exceptions" until there are no more exceptions.*

The question is, where does the sentence end for you.

Who are your and my and all of our exceptions? Who are and aren't we welcoming, valuing, respecting, hearing and supporting? Who are the people we believe don't deserve to experience those things? And, why? Where does it live and come from within each of us individually and as a leadership team? And what are we going to do from this moment on so that we live and earn the brand of being inclusive leaders. And that means that each of us works to make this a truth: On my watch, everyone feels they matter. On my watch, everyone feels welcomed, valued, respected, heard and supported. Then I asked, does that help? The leader said, "Yes. Thank you. I hadn't thought about it like that. That gives me a lot to think about."

I love my job.

Thought you might like to read and reflect on it too - because it's not just an American problem **Derek Tomlin**