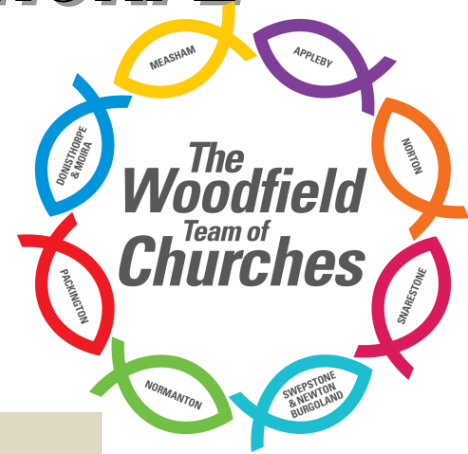


ST. JOHNS CHURCH DONISTHORPE

GRAPEVINE

SEPTEMBER 2020



GOD KNOWS US AND WHAT WE ARE CALLED TO DO.

Dear All,

It seems a long time since we moved into the vicarage on the 8th of March followed by my licensing on the 16th as team vicar and then a week or so later we found ourselves in lockdown.

Debs and I love chatting to people and enjoy being involved in community life so we were disappointed at not being able to get out and about. I do look forward to when things change.

When I was younger I would spend my summer holidays with my uncle working on his farm, I would sit on the wheel arch of his tractor pulling the string on the sledge that the hay bales would drop into. We would sit and eat our lunch in the field and enjoy the surrounding countryside. I believe I'm a country boy at heart.

On Sundays, we would attend the local church especially at harvest and rogation Sunday beating the bounds of the parish, so the rural church has always been close to my heart. As I write this a combine harvester has just come past. (I know a song about that but that's for another time)

I have done my ministry in many different settings from Sheffield to Ellesmere Port to Worcester and so I enjoy both urban and rural ministry. When God called me to ministry I never thought I would end up in such a beautiful part of the world and never thought I would be an ordained priest doing a mixture of urban and rural ministry, so I am privileged to be able to serve in this part of North West Leicestershire

I have been made to feel very welcome from all the different congregations around the Woodfield Team of churches and by people around the area, albeit at a distance in these difficult times. I look forward to being part of the communities.

It's a privilege working in this wonderful setting with some wonderful people. I believe I have been called here to share my ministry and to be part of community life when I am able. God calls us and when we hear that call, we listen and act with open hearts and minds stepping out of the boat and moving on the journey with faith and joy even when we are out of our comfort zone. I feel God has given me the tools to enable me to continue in his ministry even if I had doubts when I began this journey.

I never thought or believed that God would call me to be in ministry let alone an ordained priest but God calls all sorts of people and shows them the path. I want to encourage you at this time: there will be light at the end of the tunnel. Stay safe and remain hopeful.

One of my favourite bible verses is Mathew 10:30 "and even the very hairs of your head are numbered." God knows us and what we are called to do. We are all special and the apple of God's eye.

Blessings Rick

WILMA COLLEY TO BE ORDAINED PRIEST

Wilma's priesting should have happened back in July but the service was a casualty to Lockdown. Now it has been rearranged to September 13th, still in Leicester Cathedral. However, it won't be the big event it would normally have been. Those to be priested are split into different groups so there will be different services and Wilma can only have 5 guests with her. Normally we'd have laid on a coach to enable us all to go and celebrate but not this time. Do pray for Wilma as she prepares for this next step in her ordained life, once priested she will be able to preside at Holy Communion and pronounce the absolution and blessing so her ministry will develop further.

She will celebrate communion the first time at Measham Church at 10am on 20th September.

'BUILDING FOR ALL' PROJECT: GOOD NEWS!

Regular readers of Grapevine will know we've been working for many years at making St John's Church a 'Building for All'. While the church will primarily continue to serve as an important place of worship, our vision into the future is of a building becoming a place for all to use.

A flexible space: for the wider community to make use of, to replace that lost when the Church Hall was closed for safety reasons in 2007; a place where Clubs might meet; where families could party and celebrate special occasions; where 'get togethers' could be held, a place of congregation and fellowship; an amenity that will serve the local community well into the future.

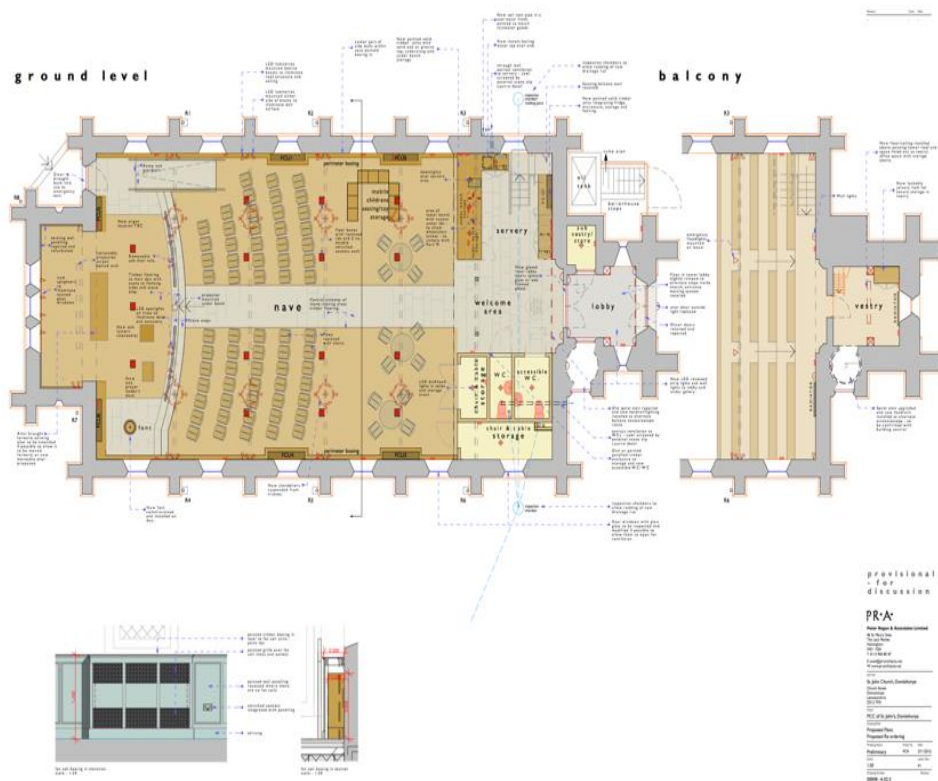
It has meant years of careful thinking and planning to hold those two concepts together well.

Plans have been batted to and fro as the church will look very different internally but not changed on the outside. We've held public meetings to share the plans.

The Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC), effectively the church planning department, look at what is proposed and make recommendations or suggest some amendment, they inform and invite consultation from heritage bodies and so forth. However the final decision is made by the Chancellor of the Diocese, who is a judge.

The good news is that at its September meeting, the DAC supported and recommended our proposals. Public notices are going up and can be seen on the church notice board, in church and on our website - like council planning notices. Once their specified publication/consultation period has expired, the whole lot goes to the Chancellor for a final decision as to whether we can get on with transforming St Johns as we propose or further adjustments are required.

Hope this little plan gives an idea of what we'll look like.



SUNDAY CHURCH SERVICES FOR THIS MONTH

Since the 2nd August, we've been testing the water with regard to Sunday worship and what we are able to maintain with the need to sanitize the building. So we're having 3 services across the 8 churches of the Woodfield Team each Sunday – so the services move round. It's worked well so far in August so will continue into September. We'll review again when we see how Coronavirus clears (or doesn't). It isn't the same pattern as August as we have weddings on Saturdays in some churches in September so do not want to use that building the next day.

September services look like this and you would be welcome at any of our village churches if Donisthorpe isn't open that Sunday:

September 6th: Measham (Morning Prayer); Appleby and Snarestone (Holy Communion)

September 13th: Normanton (MP), Donisthorpe and Sweptstone (HC)

September 20th: Norton juxta Twycross (MP), Measham and Packington (HC)

September 27th: Appleby (MP), Normanton and Donisthorpe (HC)

We owe a debt of gratitude to our churchwardens and all helpers who are making this possible as there is a lot of work involved in cleaning and rearranging things. Do remember face masks do have to be worn in church now. It does feel different at a service as there is no singing and we are all dotted around the building at due distance, and we mustn't shake hands and so forth. It has however been great to be back together giving thanks to God, praying together and learning together.

CHILDREN'S WORKER: CERIANN KELLY.

Sadly Ceriann's 3 year contract with us ends this month. It's hard to know where that 3 years has gone. Ceriann has been involved in many things: Ready Steady Stick, our 2 team play and stay groups, encouraging those in Sunday clubs and setting up a Youth group. She has led collective worship in schools and led clubs in Appleby, Measham and Packington schools. She has been a key feature of Donisthorpe's family service and been a real blessing as we have taken that service forward.

So we say farewell to Ceriann and wish her every blessing as she seeks God's path for her into the future. We're sorry to see her go.

It is a very strange ending as ever since Lockdown we haven't been able to run children's activities, and have to go into the virtual world. So Ceriann's time with us has ended differently from what we had imagined. Watch this space as we work on the way ahead for us and our children's work here. In the meantime do visit this for our online work: (<https://www.facebook.com/woodfieldchurcheschildrenswork/>) At the time of writing we do not know when we can resume our children's groups.

REFLECTION - What does God think about social distancing?

What does God think about social distancing? It might seem a funny question to ask but actually I think God has quite strong opinions on this.

Hear me out.

First up I think God would encourage us, urge us even to observe all the guidance, all the instruction we are given. Keep a good distance, avoid unnecessary travel, the whole lot. Maybe you are thinking 'OK but would God really care? Doesn't sound like His normal thing.

Well God likes life, in fact God loves life. Jesus even says He **IS** life and all the evidence says social distancing will help to preserve and protect life. So I'm pretty convinced He's encouraging His people – all people – to do their bit with that.

But I think God might not like this social distancing, while really necessary at this time is not what He really wants for us in the long term

You see, when I read The Bible, when I look at what God is like, the word 'distance' is not a word that sits well with Him. God isn't about distance, staying away. He's about relationship, coming close.

And let's face it, nobody likes social distancing. Even the introverts amongst us, we might like a bit of space ourselves, but not like this. Not all day - everyday. Not through no choice of our own. Not on the scale that we are experiencing currently.

But why is that? Why does it seem to go against the core of who we are?

I believe it's because it goes against the core of who God is and we are made to be like Him. And His way of working is to get closer and closer, not further and further.

Three months before lockdown and social distancing began, before we were setting up home offices and shutting ourselves away; we were putting up decorations, dressing trees, going to parties. At the heart of those Christmas celebrations was the earth shattering and destiny changing truth that God became one of us. That's how much He wanted to be close. He didn't stay away – He entered in.

He didn't see distance as good or travel unnecessary; no He did what He did to achieve what He wanted. And what He wanted was this – You and Me – to be close to us; have a relationship with us; be friends with us.

So as you practice social distancing – and again you must – please hear this. There is no need for SPIRITUAL DISTANCING. Remember God likes life. He loves life. He **IS** life and the life He invites us to means we are never distant, never apart, never alone.

Dave Criddle. Gold Hill Baptist Church. Chalfont St. Peters



The logo for 'Ride + Strides for Churches' features the words 'RIDE + STRIDES' in large, bold, orange letters. Above the text is a blue chain-link fence graphic on the left and a blue bunting banner on the right. Below the main text, the words 'for Churches' are written in white on a green rectangular background.



Do you have a love of Leicestershire's historic church buildings? Then put all that Lockdown cycling and walking to good use.

Leicester Historic Churches Trust do a magnificent job of supporting the repair of our historic churches. Our local churches have had much benefit from the Trust and will be looking for more help in the future. Ride+Stride is the foremost annual event to raise funds for repairs and improvements to historic churches, chapels and meeting houses throughout Leicester and Leicestershire.

Can you be part of this event? Can you ride your bike or walk between churches and be sponsored? Details from Joan Smith on 01530 515068. The sponsorship money benefits the Trust but half of what we raise comes back to the local church. Have a go this year?

This year will be different but it's great that the event is going ahead at all. It will be different as many churches won't be able to have welcomers on duty and refreshments will not be offered. You must carry your own pen and hand sanitiser to sign in at each church or chapel on the day, and a mask to wear when you enter a church or chapel, and take food and drink with you.

For more details go to <https://lhct.org.uk/ride-and-stride/> Do help.

