

Dear Friends

This Sunday: Signs and Wonders Sunday!

I've attached a new act of worship for us to engage with, with, if you wish and are able, a recorded 'Thought for the Week.'

You can access the service by opening up the pdf file attached, and click on its links: first song is traditional, the second contemporary. (You can skip the ads, and use the 'back' arrow to return to the service outline.) or go to the St Mary's Allithwaite website (you can click here).

<https://www.allithwaitechurch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2021-01-24-E3.pdf>

I'm very grateful to John Lanham, new Churchwarden at Allithwaite, for making this possible.

Staying in Touch

I've been praying and reflecting over how realistically we can stay in touch with each other during these lockdowns (of which hopefully this will be the last!). Phone and video calls are one obvious way, and many are doing this, for which I know many are grateful. Some churches put out a weekly 'in touch' newsletter, or version of the pew sheet.

How many of us?

Counting in normal times, we have somewhere over 220-250 folks gathering for worship on Sundays in the six parishes for which I'm directly responsible. Then, of course, the electoral rolls sum up to around 525 members. I'm sorry I can't phone everyone, but of course, one of the things lockdown has helped us to remember is realising the ancient truth that priesthood is shared by all believers. (1 Peter 2.9; Rev 5.10 etc).

Zoom

Zoom can only include 100, and of course many of us would rather not, or don't have access to, zoom. We thus can't do a Zoom for everyone in all six churches. Zoom seems to work best for small groups, up to about 12 so we can see each other on screen at the same time. (Someone famous had the idea of 12: can't think who it was?! Answers on a postcard...)

Zooming Alpha

Interestingly, I was invited to join a Zoominar last week by the Alpha Course. They've had a huge growth in numbers signing up for Alpha, and have concluded that it's even *more* effective on line than in person, but they keep the groups as small as possible, and the discussion groups to between 4 and 8 if possible.

Zoom hosts

A number of our churches have found able and willing Zoom 'hosts' who make the meeting happen for Sunday small group, PCC, Worship Committee, mid-week catch up, zoom-coffee etc.

Zooming around Lent

As Lent approaches, Bishop Emma has offered to put together a Lent Course for the diocese. It would be good to pray and explore to see if each church could find a Zoom host, and a person to lead a Lent Course using Bishop Emma's materials. If we can do this, each church can then Zoom through Lent, keeping in touch, encouraging one another until the time the vaccine has got round and we can begin to work our way back to 'normal' life.

One of the wonders the Alpha Course people have found is that the Holy Spirit isn't fazed by the internet. The Spirit is still moving, bringing signs of the presence of the Kingdom today, growing a sense of Wonder at what God can do.

God bless us as we trust Christ to transform us, our churches and our communities

Jim

