



May 2020

Dear Friends,

We're living in unprecedented times. None of us have experienced anything like this before. There are some who said that the closing down of so much of our daily life was unnecessary and simply scaremongering and causing panic. Others that we didn't do this early enough. We stay at home to safeguard and protect the elderly and vulnerable groups in our society - those most liable to catch the coronavirus. To reduce the pressure on our NHS.

I've been overwhelmed by the care and concern there has been for those having to totally self isolate whilst the rest of us can go out for a daily walk or weekly shop. Jesus said "Love thy neighbour" and "care for those in need." That's exactly what we've seen. People helping those in our communities, not just their friends but people that previously they hadn't known by sight or name. A new strong feeling of community has emerged. The support groups and networks that have been set up are amazing.

But whilst the majority of us have been "locked down" others in essential jobs have continued to go out to work to provide what we need to stay at home.

Those in food shops, factories, farmers, delivery drivers who ensure that food and our essentials are available for us. Those who keep our utilities going so that we may comfortably and safely live in our homes. Providing all the amenities and things we are used to including our IT, broadband and media which has kept us in touch and entertained, and allowed so many to work from home. Each Thursday evening millions of us up and down the country take to our doorsteps to say thank you to frontline staff - doctors, nurses, care workers, supermarket staff, the emergency services and teachers.

As I write this we've just been told we have yet another 3 weeks of "lockdown" ahead of us and even then it may not be over! Whilst ironically the sun keeps shining, it all seems quite bleak as we adjust to our new realities; of being confined at home together 24/7, home schooling children, working from home, being laid off from work, living alone in isolation, feel financial strain during the uncertainty. As all this goes on people are becoming critically ill and dying as a result of the virus - even the young, fit and healthy.

I'd like to share the closing words from a recent *Call the Midwife*. "The seasons will always turn. It rains and we ford across the floods, the drought comes and we manage that too. We survive them, we grow regardless of the weather. This too will pass. We will know wonder where there has been despair. There will be happiness in this time and we will remember it. There will be friendships which we won't forget. Love is the constant whereby we endure all - all winters and all storms. It's the time in which all things can thrive. The darkness is like a canopy from which the stars can hang. For there are always stars, we just need to look for them.." I've come to realise that everyone of us is a star that can shine in the darkness to lighten the path of others and even ourselves if we choose to. Each with our place each with our purpose as fixed as the familiar constellations. The stars are shining throughout our communities, their "light shines in the darkness". May these feelings and action to be community... to help one another continue when this time has passed. Keep yourselves, your families and your neighbours safe. God bless you all.

Rev'd Nicki

CHURCH SERVICES - New DIGITAL CHURCH

As we face a time of challenge, where prayer, worship and fellowship with others feels increasingly important, we find any plans to gather together as a worshipping community are on hold, due to social distancing and self-isolation. It started with all public worship in groups being cancelled and then the church buildings were locked. Many people were asking.... *'How do we keep our faith strong in this time and how, if we find ourselves in isolation, do we maintain a rhythm of prayer and worship?'*

Whilst we are *'locked in'* to our homes we are *'locked out'* of our churches, but *church is not closed it has changed*. Many churches chose to record services or livestream using YouTube, Facebook and other media. But many of these don't allow live interaction between the participants. I wanted to hold services that would allow us to talk to and see one another in the same way we do when face to face in church. I therefore set up our new DIGITAL CHURCH using the ZOOM conferencing service. This has allows the church community to gather together for worship and a much need chance to chat and socialise in the safety of our own homes.

We have a fully interactive service in the same way we would in a service held in the church. The words for the service and hymns are projected on the screen and people switch their microphones on and off as they join in to read the bible, say prayers and lead us as we sing to live music. The music for singing was initially very distorted until we discovered the *'original sound'* button now our piano and vocal accompaniment makes singing so good that we are having a very uplifting twice weekly *'Songs of Praise'* every Wednesday and Sunday evening - email me your hymn requests.

Our first DIGITAL CHURCH service was on Mothering Sunday and we've had 2 services a day ever since. The service *'attendance'* has been 50 to 60 on Sunday Morning and 12 to 16 at each of the 2 daily services and it's allowed families from all over the country to meet and worship together - we've had family members from Birmingham, Yorkshire, Wales, London, Surrey and elsewhere - it's amazing. The worship is sandwiched between a pre and post chat often with a coffee or glass of wine in hand! It seems to be bringing a routine to people's day giving a spiritual and much needed social connection. If you haven't already done so join us at DIGITAL CHURCH.

Rev'd Nicki

Services are DAILY at 10.30am and 6pm.
They can be accessed via the Burton Dassett Church website.
www.burtondassettchurch.org