



The Diocese of Southwark

The Venerable Simon Gates
Archdeacon of Lambeth

The Venerable Moira Astin
Archdeacon of Reigate

The Revd Gregory Prior
Joint Acting Archdeacon of Wandsworth

The Revd Canon Jonathan Sedgwick
Acting Archdeacon of Southwark

The Revd John Whittaker
Joint Acting Archdeacon of Wandsworth

The Venerable Alastair Cutting
Archdeacon of Lewisham & Greenwich

The Venerable Dr Rosemarie Mallett
Archdeacon of Croydon

21 July 2021

Archdeacons' Summer 2021 letter to be read at PCC meetings

Dear friends,

After so many months of lockdown and other limitations on how public worship is conducted, the Government has fulfilled its pledge to lift all legal restrictions in relation to the Covid-19 restrictions on the 19 July, replacing them with an emphasis on personal responsibility. This comes as a relief and a joy to us after such a long time - but with risks remaining, we are not yet back to our pre-pandemic practise.

Lifting of legal restrictions is not without its own challenges for PCCs as we move to this next phase, remaining attentive to ongoing risk, yet making new plans for recovery and the physical regathering of our congregations.

We have collective responsibilities to balance our new freedoms along with appropriate concern and conduct in relation to those of our faith communities with underlying health and other anxieties that leave them still vulnerable and even fearful as we re-gather onsite in our churches. Despite high rates of vaccinations, the *Delta variant* infections continue to rise, and gathering indoors remains one of the risks for infection - but the risks can be largely contained with appropriate procedures in place. Please take particular care to think of the individuals and groups most impacted by this - and not forgetting the clergy in that.

As we enter this next phase of recovery - as we rebuild, reconnect and assemble together again - we will need fresh adjustments to risk assessments and local policies on social distancing and mask-wearing in our buildings. In allowing for local variation, we realise that this may be an additional pressure as not all in the parish may agree on how to proceed. We have heard of some churches proposing two services: one with the full existing (or a moderation of them) social distancing measures and one without. Other churches are exploring how they can have different zones within their building. We are more than willing to help churches think through the issues.

We expect it is going take considerable time for attendance figures to return to any sense of stability or reach pre-pandemic *Usual Sunday Attendance* rates, and many churches may feel numbers are not 'back to normal' before Spring 2022.





Our Mission team under Canon Jay Colwill and the Bishop's Advisory Group on Liturgy have already produced resources to assist the return to gathered worship in person: [We Are Open](#), [O Lord Open Our Lips](#). This Autumn, perhaps more than ever, there is value in picking up the themes and opportunities of 'Back to Church Sunday'.

The work of recovery will have many aspects, however - PCC planning, ensuring worship schedules cherish the learning that has emerged from the pandemic, reviewing Mission Action Plans, reconnecting with families for occasional offices, reviving social, community and fundraising activities, discerning how best to respond to need in Christ's name. But before this recommences in your Autumn meetings, we encourage you to take time over the Summer to breathe and reset, and to pace yourselves both individually and as local church community.

Please feel free to make use of the Bishop's permission during this time not to hold a eucharist each Sunday, if cover cannot readily be found while your priest is on leave, and to take advantage of the online alternatives on offer from the Cathedral or neighbouring parishes. Without rest, we are likely to find that the long-term impact of this pandemic will affect our perceptions as we plan for recovery. Without rest, we might miss what the Spirit is saying to the churches as we discern the shape of our future together and the tasks to which we lay our hands in the Lord's service.

We always look forward with hope. Christ has conquered and the Church and the world is His. He will accompany us on this next phase of our journey and bless what we offer in His name.

With our thanks and prayers,

Simon Gate. Moira Astin 
 Alastair Cutting  
Paul Sedgwick

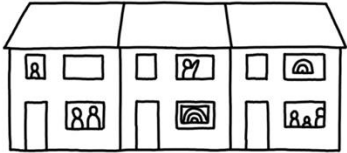
The Archdeacons of the Diocese

Please find attached Dave Walker & Jayne Manfredi's *Beatitudes for a Global Pandemic*, as much of what it stands for remains current. See more [here](#).

BEATITUDES

FOR A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO STAY INDOORS



FOR THEY HAVE PROTECTED OTHERS

BLESSED ARE THE UNEMPLOYED AND THE SELF-EMPLOYED



FOR THEIR NEED OF GOD IS GREAT

BLESSED ARE THE CORNER SHOPKEEPERS



FOR THEY ARE THE PURVEYORS OF SCARCE THINGS

BLESSED ARE THE DELIVERY DRIVERS AND THE POSTAL WORKERS



FOR THEY ARE THE BRINGERS OF ESSENTIAL THINGS

BLESSED ARE THE HOSPITAL WORKERS; THE AMBULANCE CREWS, THE DOCTORS, THE NURSES, THE CARE ASSISTANTS, AND THE CLEANERS



FOR THEY STAND BETWEEN US AND THE GRAVE, AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS SURELY THEIRS

BLESSED ARE THE CHECKOUT WORKERS



FOR THEY HAVE PATIENCE AND FORTITUDE IN THE FACE OF OVERWORK AND FRUSTRATION

BLESSED ARE THE REFUSE COLLECTORS



FOR THEY WILL SEE GOD DESPITE THE MOUNTAINS OF WASTE

BLESSED ARE THE TEACHERS



FOR THEY REMAIN STEADFAST AND CONSTANT IN DISTURBING TIMES

BLESSED ARE THE CHURCH WORKERS; THE DEACONS, PRIESTS AND BISHOPS



FOR THEY ARE A COMFORTING PRESENCE IN A HURTING WORLD AS THEY CONTINUE TO SIGNPOST TOWARDS GOD

BLESSED ARE THE SINGLE PARENTS,



FOR THEY ARE COPING ALONE WITH THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AND THERE IS NO RESPIRE

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE ALONE,



FOR THEY ARE CHILDREN OF GOD AND WITH HIM THEY WILL NEVER BE LONELY

BLESSED ARE THE BEREAVED,



FOR WHOM THE WORST HAS ALREADY HAPPENED. THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE ISOLATED WITH THEIR ABUSERS



FOR ONE DAY - WE PRAY - THEY WILL KNOW SAFETY

BLESSED ARE ALL DURING THIS TIME WHO HAVE PURE HEARTS; ALL WHO STILL HUNGER AND THIRST FOR JUSTICE; ALL WHO WORK FOR PEACE AND WHO MODEL MERCY



MAY YOU KNOW COMFORT. MAY YOU KNOW CALM. AND MAY THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE LOVE OF GOD, AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, BE WITH US ALL. AMEN