



ST PANCRAS NEWSLETTER – JULY 2021



Dear friends,

The Riches of God's Patience

One of the first things that Jessica and I noticed when we arrived in Plymouth is that people have time for each other. We sat down at a bus stop and the person next to us began a conversation. We were queuing for an ice cream and the person serving asked how we were. People were talking over their shopping baskets at Morrison's. Such things were unheard of in impatient London and Oxford, from where we had come.

I'm reminded of those early experiences, this week, as we begin the next phase of pandemic life. Many people are excited, hurrying back to places they haven't been for months. New clubs and cafés have opened. Other people are wary and worried as infection numbers climb quickly for the first time in our city. It takes a real effort to stop and listen to people. To stop the hurry. To stop our minds racing and worrying about 'what if ...?' To stop and make time for people with whom we may disagree.

Newspapers and social media are shrill. Forgiveness and forbearance are in short supply. So may I suggest we return to good Plymouth habits!

One Christian way to do that, is to think of the patience of God.

Amid the pandemic, God doesn't seem to be in a hurry. We have prayed regularly for a rapid end to these outbreaks of the virus, and rightly so. But we also need to allow the patience of God to shape our lives.

God's patience is on display throughout the pages of the Bible. The apostle Peter writes about this in his second letter: 'The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness. ... The day of the Lord will come.' (2 Peter 3.9-10). We cannot judge God just according to our times. Nor should we think that our short lives will continue their merry way forever. Pandemics, floods, wars and death, are a reminder that all human life is short. And we will all one day, inevitably, meet God face to face.

God's patience is written into the history of our world. There is much that we would seek to change and change quickly. But St Paul reminds us that the 'riches of God's kindness, forbearance and patience' are to lead human beings to repentance (Romans 2.4) We cannot blame God's patience for all the awful things that happen in our world.

And, as I look back at my own life, I can see so many ways in which God has been patient with me. I'm often not the person I would want to be and often fall short of my own standards of loving other people (let alone God's standards). Yet, at last Sunday's 9am service, I was impressed very strongly of God's patient love, forgiveness and healing as Sarah preached from Mark chapter 6. Some of you may have seen the little

buttons some Christians wear: 'PBPWMGIFWMY'. The letters stand for: 'Please be patient with me, God isn't finished with me yet!'

God's patience isn't an excuse to get things wrong. But it is a comfort to know that, as a church, we are a work in progress. Saint Benedict, writing more than 1500 years ago in his thoughts about the Christian life, compares believers to the tools in a master craftsman's workshop. Tools are shaped by the craftsman's hands as he works with them every day. Through years of use, handles are smoothed, blades are sharpened, cracks are glued and repaired. In the same way, our lives are shaped by God in the workshop of His church.

Every blessing in Jesus Christ,

Lawrence



WHAT TO EXPECT AT ST PANCRAS FROM SUNDAY 26TH JULY ONWARDS

For everyone's safety and peace of mind, there will be few immediate changes at St Pancras from next Sunday.

On Sundays:

- ❖ Please continue to wear masks when you come to church.
- ❖ Please don't come to church if you have any COVID-type symptoms or have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test, Track and Trace.
- ❖ Please continue to keep physically distancing within the church, don't move around within the church unless necessary and leave promptly at the end of the service.
- ❖ Please continue to sign in or use the QR code on the doors.
- ❖ Please continue to follow the advice of the welcoming team.

However, from next Sunday, we will:

- ❖ Start singing again in church (with masks on).
- ❖ Start regular children's groups again.
- ❖ Make preparations to safely serve tea and coffee after the service again.
- ❖ Make preparations for the prayer team to offer prayer after the service again.

These decisions were made by the Church Council at Monday's PCC meeting (19 July). They are based on the guidance received from the Church of England, the Diocese of Exeter and information from the Public Health advisor for Plymouth. More details are in the coronavirus update and unlocking plan at the end of this newsletter. Please do not hesitate to contact one of the leadership team or a member of the church council if you have any questions.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT SAINT PANCRAS

Wednesday 28th July

Feast of Fun at St Pancras: (and every Wednesday in August), from 10:00am-12 noon. Outdoor activities for all the family, a simple meal, and the Pennycross Community Larder.

Knitting Group: Restarts on 28th July. Speak to Tricia Gribble or Sue Maloney for more details.

Thursday 29th July-Tuesday 2nd August

New Wine Evening Celebrations: 7:00pm-8:30pm, in the Church Hall.

Saturday 31st July

Men's Breakfast: BBQ in the Church Car Park from 9:30am – speak to Derek Gribble for more details.

GIFT AID REMINDER

giftaid

If you are a UK taxpayer we can reclaim tax you have paid on donations made to the church. The process is easy; it involves filling out a short form and giving your money in an identifiable way, either by bank transfer or by cash or cheque in a marked envelope. Many people already do this which allows us to claim almost £9000 per year from HMRC. If you don't yet do it but are able to, please contact either Peter Dyson or Stuart Barnes.

Coronavirus Update and Unlocking Plan

The Prime Minister's announcement on 12th July meant that we have entered Stage 4 of the National Roadmap, which lifts nearly all national restrictions. Legally, we are now free to do as we choose. However, as Christians, we are called to recognise that we are members of one body, responsible to and for one another. This means

that different churches need to make their own choices and what happens at St Pancras may be different from other churches. As one person put it in one of the national newspapers this week, if we adopt a one size fits all approach then we all end up wearing the wrong trousers!

Rather than regulations we now have the following guidance on good practice in public spaces like churches:

- ❖ Get vaccinated when offered a vaccine – the vaccinations provide a 90-95% degree of protection from severe COVID symptoms, leading to hospital treatment or getting long-COVID. Some Christians do have strong concerns about the vaccination programmes, do speak to one of the clergy team if you have questions.
- ❖ Do not come to church if you have COVID-type symptoms, if you have tested positive, or if you have been asked to isolate by NHS Track and Trace. We are all encouraged to take regular 'lateral flow tests', available from local pharmacies, which also help to indicate if we are carrying the virus without knowing it.
- ❖ Keep sanitising hands (the church will frequently sanitise touched surfaces, like railings and door handles, and maintain a regular cleaning programme).
- ❖ Maintain social distancing in public places.
- ❖ Keep on wearing masks in public places while virus levels are high.
- ❖ Meet outside as much as possible, and when meeting inside keep rooms as well ventilated as possible.



If you want to read the full Church of England's guidance, you can find it here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance>

The local background is that the rate of infection in Plymouth has been climbing fast over the past few weeks. For the first time ever, we are above the national and regional average. We have lived with restrictions for over a year now.

The Church Council met on the evening of 19th July and it was agreed that we should continue to act cautiously at this time. We will continue to offer the 10:30am service online, which means that people can participate safely from home.

We want to continue to move ahead together as a church. That means we might move more quickly than some would like, and more slowly than others would wish. Nonetheless, we pray that we may all continue to bear with one another and to continue to be alert to the work of the Holy Spirit. The unlocking plan on the next page gives an idea of the direction we want to travel in together during our Sunday morning services.



Saint Pancras Church, Penryn, Cornwall, Devon

Coronavirus unlock plan

This outline is based on advice from government, the church of England, the diocese of Exeter and Plymouth's Public Health Advisor.

Date	Social Distancing etc	Refreshments	Masks and Hygiene	Singing	Communion
from 26 July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to have empty pews between occupied pews Signage on pews to remain Space between households on the same pew to be self-regulated Doors to remain open for full ventilation Screens to shelter singers etc remain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drinks (only) to be served in the church car park or from the café area (if raining) Church encouraged to bring their own mugs. Drinks to be drunk in the church car park (if raining, we'll open the church hall) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks worn on entry and exit Church encouraged to remain in their places during the service, and to enter/leave promptly. Masks encouraged when seated. Hand sanitiser will remain in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church encouraged to sing, but to sing quietly and wear their masks during singing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communion celebrated at 9am but not at 10.30am.
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheltering screens to be removed in church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refreshments return to pre-COVID pattern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wearing masks when seated is optional. Hand sanitiser remains. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communion resumes for those who want to receive, remaining seated Those presiding and distributing will mask and sanitise their hands. Congregation will receive in one kind only (wafers). Sign of the peace will be verbal only.
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No signage on pews. Doors to be closed if cold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand sanitiser will remain available in the foyer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full congregational singing returns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those presiding will unmask. Return to gathering around the Lord's table Await further guidance on return of the common cup.