

The Kingsbury and Baxterley Group of Parishes

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Dear friends

I hope you are well. These are difficult times, and it is clear that they are not going to be getting easier for some time to come. I hope that as churches, and as part of our wider communities, we can do as much as possible to support and encourage one another.

It is now six months since lockdown began, and the doors of our church buildings were closed for public worship. Since July, we have been in a gradual process of resuming worship in the buildings, whilst also continuing with offering material for people to reflect and worship at home. We shall be continuing with that provision for the foreseeable future. Video worship and reflections are posted each week on YouTube, available via the parish website and facebook page, and there is also the Dial-a-Sermon line, where you can hear that week's reflection for the price of a local call by ringing 01827 211 125. I don't want anyone to feel any pressure to attend services in church, if they do not feel safe to do so.

I am writing now to let you know of what we are planning for the next stage of resuming a full pattern of worship in each building. We are now in a position to re-introduce Sunday worship at Hurley Church, which will be at 9.30am on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month, beginning this Sunday (27 September). This will be in place of the Thursday morning service at Hurley. Wood End will continue to have a service every week on Wednesdays at 9.30am. Services at Kingsbury, Merevale and Baxterley will continue in the same pattern as we have had since July.

Although there is a restriction on the numbers allowed in each church at any one time, we have been fortunate that we have not had to bring in a booking system or turn anyone away. However, this will become more challenging in the coming months, as we enter the season where we usually hold a number of special services that attract larger numbers. I will be in touch later to share plans about Remembrance Sunday and Christmas services when we know more about what is possible. Where we do have plans is around Harvest, which will be different from previous years, but I hope none the less special and important.

A large Harvest Festival gathering and Harvest Supper will not be possible. Instead we shall have a week of smaller Harvest celebrations, one in each church. This will be:

Sunday 4 th October:	11am at Merevale (with Holy Communion) 4.30pm at Baxterley
Wednesday 7 th October:	9.30am at Wood End
Sunday 11 th October:	9.30am at Hurley 11am at Kingsbury (with Holy Communion)

I hope this will enable as many people as possible to share in the joy of Harvest, as we give thanks to God, but also express our appreciation to the farming community, who have worked so hard to keep the country fed. At each service, gifts of either money or non-perishable groceries are invited, and will be given to local food banks to help some of those most in need at this time. I would ask you, on this occasion, only to attend one of the Harvest services, so as to ensure we have room for everyone.

Our All Souls' Services of Remembrance will also have to be rather different this year. Usually, as well as inviting those who have been bereaved during the year, we have been able to welcome everyone who would like to come to those services, and remember loved ones who have died longer ago. We will need this year to restrict attendance at the dedicated services to those to whom an invitation is sent. However, our services on Sunday 1st November (All Saints' Day) at 11am at Merevale and 4.30pm at Baxterley will include a time of remembrance; please let me know (in writing or by email) if there are names that you would like to be read out at either or both of those services.

Finally, a word about the Annual Parochial Church Meetings (APCMs). Usually they are held just after Easter, when of course we were in full lockdown. The deadline by which legally they must be held was therefore extended to the end of October. The dates we have set for these meetings are:

Kingsbury: Monday 26 October at 7.30pm in Kingsbury Church

Baxterley with Hurley and Wood End: Tuesday 27 October at 7.30pm in Hurley Church

Merevale with Bentley: Wednesday 28 October at 7.30pm at Merevale Church.

Technically, each one consists of two meetings: An annual meeting of parishioners, for the election of church wardens, and then the APCM itself, where PCC and Deanery Synod members are elected, and reports received on aspects of church life, including finance and fabric. The APCM is open to anyone on that parish's electoral roll. The meetings are a legal requirement, but in the current circumstances we shall keep them as short as possible, and I recognise that not everybody will be able to attend. Reports will therefore be made available on request to anybody who would have been entitled to be present.

Unfortunately, voting in absentia is not allowed, but nominations to the elected roles can be received in advance, including by or for people who are not present at the meeting.

As part of the lead-up to the APCMs, we are required to revise the churches' electoral rolls. If you are already on an electoral roll, you don't need to do anything. If you are not yet on the roll, and would like to be and are eligible, please let me know by **Sunday 4 October**. The roll is open to anyone aged 16 or over, who is a member of the Church of England and either lives within the parish or has attended worship regularly for six months.

Sorry that it has been a rather longer letter than usual, but there has been quite a bit that I wanted to let everybody know. Obviously, all our plans have to come with the proviso that the government or wider church may at any time change what is permitted. But I hope that we are able to continue with the worship and other activities that are a valuable part of our life together. As ever, please do contact me with any questions or concerns.

With my prayers and best wishes