

Dear Friends

As life slowly starts to move towards some sort of new normal there seems to be a great deal of confusion as to just what is and isn't permitted. The announcement that churches may open for private prayer from Monday 15th June is one such example. The bishop has made it clear that this decision is entirely at the discretion of individual churches. Angela and I discussed this and asked the PCC who have agreed that All Saints will not be open for private prayer because it was not open before lockdown and it would not be possible to open safely within the current requirements and restrictions. We agreed and have issued the following statement:

The government has indicated that places of worship may open for private prayer from Monday June 15th. All Saints Church was not open for private prayer before the lockdown and this will continue once restrictions are lifted. This is a time of great challenge, uncertainty and anxiety and members of our church family pray regularly for our community here in Topley and this will not change. However, if you would like prayer for a specific situation or person, we are happy to do this on your behalf. You can email Prayer requests to churchwardenstopley@gmail.com

Requests do not need to include surnames if you prefer and you will not be contacted unless you want your request to be acknowledged.

Liz Hayden and Angela Waite. Churchwardens.

As far as opening the church again is concerned, we will await further advice, however, it is important to understand that the reopening will depend on the willingness and availability of people to do this. A number of our church family are shielding and others are in the vulnerable category and still others may not feel comfortable to come back to church until they feel assured that there is little or no risk. It is not simply a matter of opening the doors and carrying on, there are a huge number of practical considerations to take into account all of which require people to carry them out. With a limited number of people able to do this we need to be patient and understanding and gracious in accepting that we will all have different views on this. Similarly, with the church hall, the cost and extra work involved in ensuring the building is safe for public use is currently prohibitive and these costs would have to be borne by either the church or the hall users or possibly both. For the time being the buildings will remain closed and although this may be disappointing, we trust that you understand.

My contribution to this week's newsletter has been taken from 2025 Prayer Community reflections that arrived in my inbox on Tuesday. I knew I wanted to write about the events that have occurred throughout the world as a result of the death of George Floyd in America two weeks ago and these extracts from the reflections which have been provided by Graham Sandersfield - Learning Development Manager at St Peter's College put it much better than I could have done!

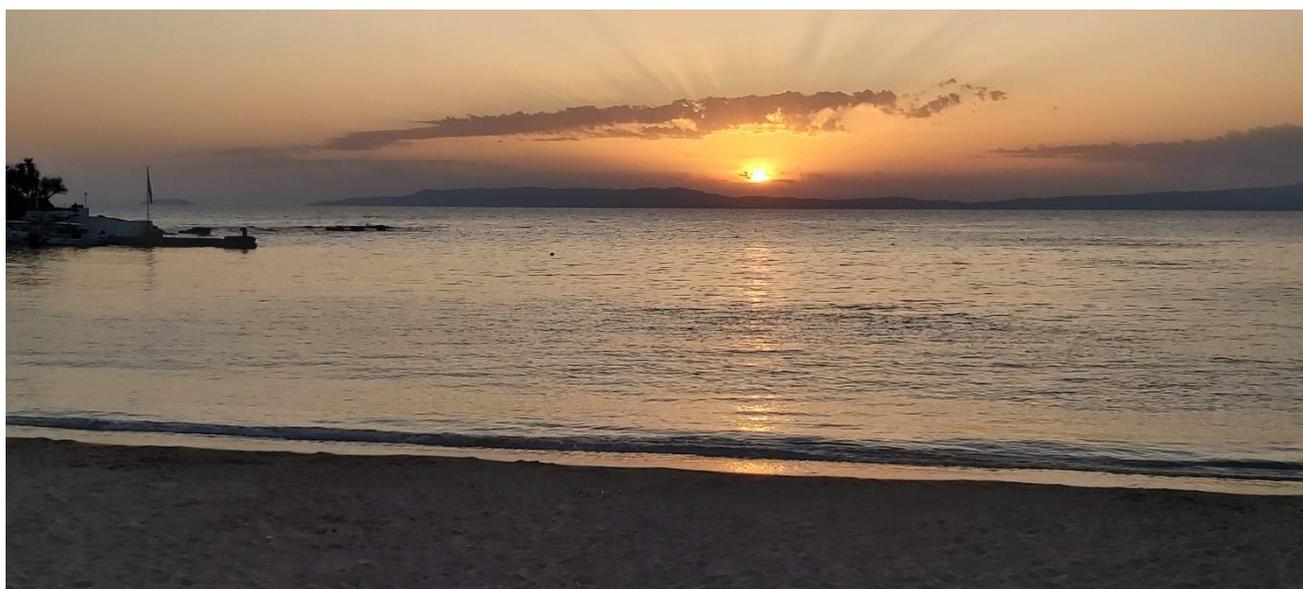
The Black Lives Matter campaign has raised questions in all of us. One question I have is 'Does God take sides?' It is very clear throughout the whole story arc of the Bible that God wants us to stand with the poor, the alien, the orphan and the widow and against injustice. Today's big issue is an age-old one that we must engage with. Like the #metoo movement this is a window of opportunity we have all been given to listen and make changes to our society that last. But we need to start with God's wisdom and his perspective. We need not polarise the arguments and pick one side or another but follow the lessons from Martin Luther King who would say injustice and hatred will not be ended by more injustice and hatred. As Christians, we have a wonderful opportunity to listen to his Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit, alongside all the helpful material that is available on this subject. To understand how we should respond to the Black Lives Matter campaign, as we pray we need God's wisdom to search our own hearts for areas of discrimination and unconscious bias that lurk deep inside every human. How are we supporting the social and economic inequality that unquestionably still exists in western society?

Should it only be black faces on the front line of the Black Lives Matter movement; those who are directly affected by the evils of racism, discrimination and inequality? Should it just be women who have been violated who push forward the #metoo message. We may or may not agree with the pulling down of statues or mass gatherings in a time when physical distancing is important but God implores us to be proactive and to speak out, not stay silent or indifferent, even if issues do not affect us directly. Pray and listen. How can we speak out with love and righteousness to defend the rights of those who are treated unjustly?

Proverbs 31:8-9 (NRSV)

Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Sadly, the events of the last few weeks have demonstrated all too clearly that whilst we are in the throes of a global pandemic which is causing untold hardship, misery and suffering, we must not lose sight of the fact that there is still much else in our broken world to be concerned about and to hold in our prayers. However there is also much to be thankful for: homes, families, friends, food, keyworkers hospitals, technology that helps us every day..... the list is endless and there may be other things for which you are especially thankful. Finally a few photographs to remind us of the beauty of our world and a quote that you may find encouraging.



When I look at God's beautiful creation I am reminded that, since He is powerful enough to do that I can trust Him with my life as well.

With Love

Angela and Liz