

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 79

Sunday 20th December 2020

‘Virtually Church but with some way to go...’

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday’s edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. Following the Prime Minister’s announcement yesterday our understanding is that our current arrangements for services will not be affected.

If between now and Christmas this proves not to be the case then we will let you know as soon as possible what changes may become necessary.

We do of course need to note that ‘Christmas Bubbles’ can now only be formed on Christmas Day itself. Previously they could be formed for the whole of the period 23rd to 27th December.

Scripture Passage

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.”

But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the

throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her

Reflection

The day of our Camelot Christmas Carol Service is also the last Sunday of Advent. A Sunday on which traditionally we remember the part Mary, the mother of Jesus, plays in the Christmas story.

In this reading the angel Gabriel announces the birth of Jesus to Mary. She displays the qualities of humility and trust which are so inspirational. Yes, she does question ‘How can this be?’ and yet she shows an extraordinarily deep level of acceptance of God’s destiny for her, ‘Let it be with me according to your word.’

In other Christmas readings we hear the accounts of Jesus’ birth. He was born in a manger because there was no room at the inn, the angels worshipped at His birth and the shepherds and wise men came to pay homage to Him. What might Mary have felt when at the birth of her child angels, wise men and shepherds all worshipped? Was this easy to accept? And how about being shut out of the inn at the end of a long, hard journey? And there were the dangers which always lurked in the background and sometimes came into

the spotlight. The power of the Roman Empire able to move everyone around as a census is ordered. Herod plotting to destroy the new born Messiah. This was the world of risk which Mary accepted as she responded to God's call on her life.

And then the famous reading from John's gospel which focusses on the divine nature of Jesus. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'. Where is Mary in that? Perhaps this is not so obvious. And yet she is there, 'And the Word became flesh'. How could God, the Word, become flesh, as Jesus Christ of Nazareth? Surely this is impossible. And yet through Mary's willing obedience the Word did indeed become flesh.

Yes, it is only God who can work a miracle. And yet in the working of miracles we also need to play our part. For God to be born in human form, it was necessary for Mary freely to offer herself, 'Let it be with me according to your word.'

God worked through Mary. And will God work through us? In the last year we have seen many examples of God working through other people. This may have been in the shape of the courage and heroism of those in the health services or people who like Captain Tom embarked on daring initiatives and raised extraordinary amounts of money to help others or groups in our own communities who have volunteered their time, gifts and money.

Let us ask ourselves how the Christmas story was seen through the eyes and heart of Mary. And as we see and understand how Mary was willing to let God work through her, let us ask also 'How will God work through us?'

Tristram

Rules following lockdown

The Camelot Group falls within the area of South Somerset. This area (along with many others) has been placed in Tier 2 which is one of High

Alert. Full guidance on what this means can be found on the government website:- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tier-2-high-alert>

As far as places of worship are concerned they are open although we are not allowed to socialise there with anyone outside of our household or support bubble. As explained below the Christmas Bubbles (effective only on Christmas Day itself) extend our bubbles to a maximum of three households. Weddings and funerals are also permitted with numbers restricted at weddings to 15 and at funerals to 30.

Making decisions on Christmas Services

The options that were available to us in providing Christmas services were (a) indoors (b) outdoors (c) livestreamed (d) recorded. I comment on each of these various options in turn below. It is also worth mentioning that we also needed to take account of the number of officiants we had available to lead Christmas services. This meant, for instance, that it was not possible to provide a Christmas Day service for Blackford. However, Blackford and Galhampton which do not have Christmas Day services do have services on both Christmas Eve and the Sunday following Christmas, 27th December.

It is not possible to cover all eventualities but given the extraordinary circumstances under which we are operating we have tried in our process of decision making to be as inclusive as we can so that as many people as possible can enjoy church Christmas celebrations in one form or another.

(a) Indoor services

In other years, this is how we have held Christmas services.

However, in the extraordinary circumstances of this year indoor services have presented new challenges which principally relate to the reduced socially distanced capacity of the church.

It has been necessary for churchwardens and others to determine how many people may safely be accommodated in their church and to weigh this against their anticipated likely attendance. For the purpose of knowing what their likely attendance might be they may have communicated with their potential congregations by email or letter.

Another consideration for indoor services is that the congregation is not allowed to sing although an organist can play and a small socially distanced choir can sing.

(b) Outdoor services

Although some churches have decided to go ahead with indoor services on a socially distanced basis others have decided that an outdoor service represents a better alternative.

This is likely to result in an increased overall capacity although there is still the need to maintain social distancing.

It is also possible for the congregation to sing carols outside which they are not able to do inside.

The obvious downside with an outdoor service is the possibility of bad weather.

(c) Livestreaming

Because of the generosity of Dan Gruner, a parishioner in Galhampton, and his colleagues who have freely offered their professional services and expertise we have been able to consider the option of livestreaming from St Michael's North Cadbury.

We anticipated that the numbers of those who might wish to attend the Camelot Carol Service at St Michael's North Cadbury on Sunday 20th December were likely to be considerably greater than our socially distanced capacity. For this reason we decided to pursue the option of livestreaming this service with only the participants present. The alternative would have been either to adopt a strict ticketing system or to turn people away at the door and we did not wish to do this. The livestreaming will at a later point then be uploaded as a recording available for everyone to view with a link given through Cutting Edge Camelot and any other appropriate means.

(d) Recorded service

The midnight service on Christmas Eve at St Michael's North Cadbury was also likely to provide similar social distancing issues. For this service we have opted to make a recording of this Christmas Communion available from 11.30 onwards on Christmas Eve. Again the link will be given through Cutting Edge Camelot and any other appropriate means.

In the event that the weather is so bad on Christmas Day that it makes outdoor services impractical this recorded service also provides an available back up in the event that people are not able to come to an outdoor service.

Schedule of services during Christmas period (20th to 27th December)

Chronological order

Sunday 20th December

3.00 pm Yarlington, Afternoon Carol Service, outdoors

6.00 pm North Cadbury, Camelot Carol Service, livestreamed and recorded behind closed doors, also available later as a download

Christmas Eve

- 11.00 am Galhampton, Carol Service, indoors
3.30 pm Blackford, Readings and Carols, in the churchyard outdoors
4.00 pm North Cadbury, Communal Carol Singing, outdoors
Available from 11.30 pm
North Cadbury, Midnight Communion, recorded

Christmas Day

- 9.30 am Yarlington, Readings and Carols, outdoors weather permitting,
indoors if not
9.30 am Compton Pauncefoot, Communion, indoors
9.30 am South Cadbury, Readings and Carols, indoors
10.00 am North Cheriton, Readings and Carols, outdoors
11.00 am North Cadbury, Communion, outdoors
11.00 am Holton, Readings and Carols, outdoors
11.00 am Maperton, Communion, indoors

Sunday 27th December

- 9.00 am Blackford, Communion, indoors
11.00 am Galhampton, Communion, indoors

Outdoor services - Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Christmas Eve

- 3.30 pm Blackford, Readings and Carols
4.00 pm North Cadbury, Communal Carol Singing

Christmas Day

- 9.30 am Yarlington, Readings and Carols, outdoors weather permitting,
indoors if not
- 10.00 am North Cheriton, Readings and Carols
- 11.00 am North Cadbury, Communion
- 11.00 am Holton, Readings and Carols

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Communion services

Christmas Eve

From 11.30 pm North Cadbury, Midnight Communion, recorded

Christmas Day

- 9.30 am Compton Pauncefoot, Communion, indoors
- 11.00 am North Cadbury, Communion, outdoors
- 11.00 am Maperton, Communion, indoors

Please remember

Meeting inside church

Under Tier 2 restrictions we are allowed to come to church to worship but we are not allowed to socialise outside of our own household/bubble (on Christmas Day this includes 'Christmas Bubbles' of up to three households).

We need to interpret these regulations sensibly. We do not think that they are meant to exclude greeting or acknowledging the presence of other people. However, they do mean that within the church we should not engage in conversations of any length outside our household or bubble either before or after the church service. This may result in going outside the church in which case...

Meeting outside church

We may go outside church. Tier 2 regulations here are less strict although their impact is still very real. Outside it is possible to meet with friends and family we do not live with in a group of no more than six (the so called 'rule of six'). However, the need for social distancing still applies and although such meetings are possible we have been advised to be careful in terms of the total number of meetings we have.

Christmas Bubbles

On Christmas Day there are so called 'Christmas Bubbles'. These are groups formed by up to three households but with no overall restrictions on numbers. They are able to meet in places of worship. They do not need to sit together but must not interact outside their own bubble.

Carol singing outdoors

The congregation can sing as part of a service, allowing for appropriate social distancing.

Carol singing indoors

Congregations cannot sing although a small choir, limited in size so far as possible can sing.

Let us know your plans

If you are intending to come to a Christmas service (particularly an indoor service) which you do not normally attend it would be greatly appreciated if you could let the relevant churchwarden(s) know in advance. This will very much help them in their planning for safe social distancing at these services.

Excalibur

An online version of Excalibur including all this service information will shortly be uploaded by Rob on the website camelotparishes.co.uk

The Parish Office

The Parish Office is closed although Rob does come in regularly. In his absence please contact Rob via email (office@camelotparishes.org.uk) or on 01749 850934.

Update on Bishop Peter

Bishop Peter thanks everyone for all the cards and other expressions of support which he has received. A card was sent to him on behalf of the Camelot Parishes as a whole. He says that he has been lifted on 'eagle's wings' through the love and prayers of others. He has now received a stem cell transplant. Please pray for the new cells to 'do their bit' and for his continued healing. Please continue to pray for him and his family in this challenging time. Please pray also for Bishop Ruth and the rest of the Bishop's Staff as they take on the oversight of the diocese in his absence.

Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family

*We pray that 'we might live in love,
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us'*

(Ephesians 5:2)