

An Open Letter to our Parishioners

Do this in remembrance of me. (1 Corinthians 11)



When St Paul gave teaching on how Jesus should be remembered, he obviously had no concept of remote communion. His concerns with regards to the Corinthian Christians were more about equality. The sharing of bread and wine was still very much connected with everyday meals, and as such some had more to eat than others; sadly for some there was more of a focus on eating than sharing.

Holy Communion, The Lord's Supper, Eucharist, is now much more formulaic: we have lost the 'homely', and the action of eating together has been endowed with ritual and sacred words and actions. The one thing remaining is that we eat together.

Theology varies between those who believe that the bread and wine is literally transformed into Jesus' body and blood, and others who meet Jesus in the action of receiving. We have lived faithfully with these differences for many years, but then along came the internet. From the beginning of internet worship (long before the pandemic), there was a difference of opinion as to whether or not it was even possible, spiritually, to be 'in communion' with someone who wasn't in the same room as you. However internet church only affected a small proportion of Christians, so these debates were not shared with many traditional church-going Christians.

Then along came Covid-19 and Easter 2020. All churches were shut and the only way to worship was at a distance. We all found ourselves worshipping at a distance, except for those blessed to share their homes with others who also shared their faith. Cathedrals and parish churches alike turned to the internet in ways never done before: indeed we were accused of 'breaking the internet' when more churches turned to the newly launched 'Zoom' than the platform could handle.

Locally we began with morning and evening prayer on Facebook, and discovered an interesting congregation, far different from the usual Sunday morning faithful. Not all could grasp the way of Facebook, so a YouTube page was set up too, and then a second when John cleverly worked out how to include more people to provide a greater sense of togetherness. Now we also have Zoom Church and we can see who else we are worshipping with, and it feels much more like a community.

The question still exists as to whether can be united in worship. With the Facebook and Zoom live feeds, we can actually communicate with each other; we are not occupying the same space, but certainly the same time. Does this mean that we are in communion with each other? Does this make sharing bread and wine possible?

It may not have been perfectly canonical, but during the first lockdown Holy Communion was celebrated from the Rectory doorstep, and livestreamed. Some joined me in person, at a distance, bringing their own bread and wine with them. Some watched a pre-record on YouTube, some watched on Facebook as it happened with bread and wine at home.

The feedback was interesting and varied. Those who regularly tuned in definitely recognised a sacred moment in what they were doing with a little bread and wine of their own at home. For others it just didn't feel real. Even amongst the ministry team different views were expressed.

This Sunday, via Zoom, we shall be sharing a 'love feast' or 'agape meal'. It won't be the same as Holy Communion as we would experience in our church buildings; however, you *are* invited to prepare some bread and wine for your own use as we read the passage from Corinthians. It won't be the same as our traditional Sunday Service, but then even if we were in church sharing communion together, we wouldn't currently be able to drink from the cup.

This Sunday, I invite you to enter into the spirituality of remembering, faithfully, as Jesus called us to do, and trust that Jesus will meet us in the moment and make it truly sacred.

Love thy neighbour!

Don't forget that this Sunday is Valentine's Day, which is a perfect opportunity to show love to our neighbours (and who doesn't need cheering up at this time?) Let's decorate our windows with hearts to give our neighbours a reminder of how special they are when they pass by on their daily walks.



With love and blessings,

Vanessa

A reminder that **Compline** is livestreamed each evening at 6pm here www.facebook.com/thewallopingvicar/live

Dawn send out links for the Sunday services (with prayers and hymns for Zoom) on Friday.