

Dear Friend

What does it mean to be 'church' when we are unable to meet together? The word is a translation of the Greek 'ecclesia' which means assembly or gathering. As has been said many times, church is not about a building but about the people. But if the people are unable to meet together - in a particular building or anywhere else - how can we continue to function as 'church'? Of course being church is more - much more - than just meeting together for worship; our gathering is supposed to encourage, strengthen and equip us to then be a people who are dispersed across our society where we live out our faith and our calling as salt and light in the world, as leaven in the lump of dough, as agents of grace and change in our homes and families, which is just about the only place most of us can be at the moment!

We are truly blessed to be living in these times when we can be connected through technology. We can take it for granted, as we often do when something becomes familiar and routine, but imagine what life was like just 40 years ago - no emails, no internet, no services to watch on YouTube. What bliss you might say! Technology has brought with it its own set of pressures as well as benefits, but one real blessing is being able to connect with people from right across the globe.

There is, however, an even more significant way in which we are connected together, which is by the Holy Spirit of God. Paul calls the church to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4), which if you think about it is actually easier at a distance! So may we be encouraged to pray for one another and make the effort to keep in contact with each other, and take this opportunity to reimagine what being a member of or having a connection with St Matthew's means for us right now. What kind of a church does the Lord Jesus Christ want us to become?

You may be aware that the Diocese of Southwark has encapsulated its vision in three words: Walking, Welcoming, Growing. In its expanded form it is: Walking with Jesus and getting to know Jesus better as we journey on; Welcoming all, embracing our diversity and seeking new ways of being church;

Growing in numbers, generosity, faith and discipleship as we grow God's Kingdom.

We have had some discussions at the PCC about whether there are three words that could encapsulate both how we see St Matthew's now and how we would like to see the church in the future; I'd like to broaden out the discussion to include you. Your thoughts, ideas and suggestions, would be very welcome. We are looking for active words that are easy to remember - answers on a post card please! (Or email if that's easier!)

May God help us to express our love for him, for our neighbours and for one another as we live through these times, and may we hold one another in our hearts as the risen Lord holds us in His.

Verses for today:

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.



*Ephesians 4.3-6*

A church sign from the USA:



May our glorious risen Lord keep you, guide you, bless you and protect you today and always.

With much love and prayer

Simon