



the Arena Weekly

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newsletter

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Dear All,

So this is the end of the third week of this latest lockdown: we still have ten more days to go! But we are really optimistic that the government will allow churches and other places of worship to open at the start of December, based on the evidence that they are some of the safest spaces for people to meet in.

In the meantime we are doing our best to meet the challenge of producing virtual 'Services of the Word' and I would like to begin this edition of the Arena e-newsletter by saying a very real thank you to Adam Dickson our administrator who has kindly taken over as our 'video producer' from Sinead.

So what has to be done to achieve the 50minute service? Because it is not a Mass we have to create the service each week from scratch, selecting a 'theme' for the day and choosing Bible readings which bring that to life. We usually have to shorten and 'edit' the Bible passages, taking out repetitions and more difficult words so they are easier to listen to. We can't assume people have the words in front of them although they are available on the web site.

Once a sermon has been written and prayers chosen we then need to get in touch with readers prepared to record various parts of the service at home and then send them back to Adam. This is easier said than done: messages at any point can get diverted into Spam boxes and sometimes the files are too large to send as email attachments. Thank you to all those who have persevered with the technology!

Then there is the music - organ music from Adam and hymns sung by either Isabel or Ros who kindly come into Church on Saturday mornings so that Adam can accompany them on the organ. Lastly there are the words to be uploaded from this computer so that people can sing along to the hymns - and also some photographs to be taken for showing at the beginning and the end of the service. There can be up to sixteen different sections in any one service for Adam to stitch together!

This he does having arrived at St James' at about 9.45am on Saturday mornings, loaded up with an iPad, a laptop computer and a mobile phone. By juggling each of these he can download the files from me and from members of the congregation and begin to put them together as professionally as possible. He does it very well indeed! But it takes him a long time: most of a full day.

So is it worth all this amount of work? The simple answer is that if we take the numbers watching on YouTube at face value, our 'congregation' has doubled since the beginning of this last lockdown.

But we do need to find a way to make the filming less demanding. At one Church we heard about from Isabel, the parish editor has just resigned because of the amount of work involved. Yet what we are doing at St James' is very much in keeping with what other parishes are doing all over the country. We have suddenly had to become very good at adapting to the digital age. (continued over).



A SERVICE OF THE
WORD
for the Feast of
Christ the King
November 22nd 2020

as streamed from
St James' Church,
Prebend Street

AT THE PCC meeting on Monday 23rd November, we are to take a first look at what new options might be available. If, as people say, they want the choice of being able to come to Church - or to watch at home - how can we make that possible?

There are now several AV packages on the market. These would be permanent installations with two cameras rather than one, not only avoiding having to have an iPad in the middle of the aisle as at present but also making it possible to zoom in on what is happening, both at the front of the Church and during baptisms at the Font. The control would be from an i-Pad at the organ console. (Thanks Adam!) The question always is: is it worth the investment? Could we get a grant to help? We will let you know the outcome of the discussion next week.

TREASURE HUNT Who knows quite what will be possible in and around Church this year but one thing is certain: we are planning a Christmas Treasure Hunt! Designed by Catriona Wilkinson (Burniston) who loves these quizzes and who is designing a similar Hunt for her village in West Yorkshire, we do hope this will be something that many of our families can take part in, whether or not we can have the usual Crib service at 6pm on Christmas Eve. All we can say right now is 'watch this space'!



SUNDAY SCHOOL We are delighted that the number of subscribers for the weekly 'Sunday School at Home' crafts has gone up to 19 this week although the new road works means that we have had to increase the number of envelopes being sent out by post. Hope you enjoy this one!



SORRY TO SEE YOU GO! We have often talked about the revolving door at St James' As people join us (Welcome!) so others leave. This week we say a sad goodbye to Kerry, Chris and Ben Sabine who leave Baring Street for Wanstead. Kerry was, you will remember, a brilliant PCC secretary but was also married here, made her First Communion here and brought Ben for baptism. Also on the move Brian and Oscar Yeats who leave New North Road for Edinburgh. They sadly lost Caroline at the beginning of 2020. We wish them all every blessing and hope they will still keep in touch with St James'.



HUGE THANKS FROM THE CHILDREN OF BONDA Each year we devote our Harvest Thanksgiving appeal to the AIDS orphans of Bonda in eastern Zimbabwe. Dependant on us for food and for school fees they are always very grateful for anything we can send. So I am absolutely delighted to be able to report that we doubled the collection in 2019 to a staggering £1400 this year. Thank you so much for your kindness!

NEXT WEEK (Sunday November 29th) is Advent Sunday and the start of a new Church Year. After such a tough twelve months - and strange though it sounds - can we wish you a very happy 'New Year'! We certainly look forward to seeing much more of you in 2021.

Keep safe!

Best wishes as ever,
John



May God bless every £1 we give so that St James' will be here, not just for today and for tomorrow, but for the future he wants to create.