



Thursday 29th July 2021

Dear all,

Greetings everyone,

I have been feeling for some time that I should write to you all on the theme of sabbath. In our Western culture, we aren't very good at living out the principle (commandment!) of taking one 24-hour period off each week and giving our gratitude to God. In Genesis, God stopped work at the end of the sixth day and he said: "It is very good" (Genesis 1:31). He ceased from his labour, and he enjoyed what he had made. And to this end, he blessed the seventh day and made it Holy. What does this mean for us? Surely that we are to stop from our labour, simply enjoy God, enjoy his creation, enjoy the fruits of our endeavours. The whole point of Sabbath is joy in what God has done.

Sabbath is more than just rest for the body; it is inner rest for the soul. We need to rest from the anxiety and strain of our overwork, resting not in the desire to strive, to justify ourselves, but in the truth of the salvation which Christ has won for us. In our busy world, our non-stop driven society, how do we find this rest? What does it mean if you have young kids? Or do shift work? I'm afraid I can't give you all the answers, and it is something I'm trying to find the balance for in my own life – but the Bible is quite clear, it should be there in our weeks, in our rhythms, for our own good.

We need time for sheer inactivity – like the fallow year every seventh year when the Israelites were told to leave the fields empty. We need times of contemplation, recreation, and creation. We must pause to pray and worship, to be still before God and simply listen, we need truly refreshing recreation, things that energise and excite us – doing something fun is allowed! And we need to hang out in creation, expose ourselves to art or drama or music – see the world and see that it is good. Work out how you spend time with the family and find ways that it energises

you and inspires you, perhaps have one-to-one time with one of your children or play a game together.

I'm aware that it is really healthy to take a clear period of 24 hours off each week (and this is straight out of scripture) but we need to also honour the macro-rhythms of life as well. This season of Covid has been really tough for all of us, in lots of different ways, but I have felt a real strong sense that this summer break is to be a sabbath time for us as a community. I've shared this heart with the staff and wardens and said that during this summer, we will not have meetings or new projects, we aren't having lots of planning conversations for the next term, we are encouraging a lower working time, and taking breaks in the form of holidays and retreat time. You'll see below that I've outlined when the team are taking time off – please honour and respect that (except in emergencies) and be patient if you'd like to see things move a bit quicker. We all want to enter September refreshed, energised, and re-connected with God so that we can better see his Kingdom come.

I want to encourage you that this is an opportunity to do the same, you might already have holidays planned, or simply time off work. You might be already in a season of slowing down and that's great, but we all need to pause sometimes, and in this quote from Tim Keller, focus on the Lord: "The purpose of Sabbath is not simply to rejuvenate yourself in order to do more production, nor is it the pursuit of pleasure. The purpose of Sabbath is to enjoy your God, life in general, what you have accomplished in the world through his help, and the freedom you have in the gospel—the freedom from slavery to any material object or human expectation. The Sabbath is a sign of the hope that we have in the world to come."

New Wine Online



An email went out on Tuesday with details of New Wine's online activities and celebrations this year, you can find the full program of events, at <https://breakout.new-wine.org/programme/>

Don't forget there won't be an online service from St Andrew's this Sunday, 1st August, as we will join with the New Wine Morning Celebration service at 11am as a church.

Prayer for the estate in our parish

You may be aware that part of Sarah's long-term role is to start a worshipping community on the estate at the bottom end of Sneyd Green. Sarah and the PCC feel that God has begun to stir us in this area. The PCC has therefore formed a working group to look into this further. Prayer is key to everything we do and so we want to have a group of people strategically praying alongside the working group. If you are interested in finding out more, please be in touch with James or Sarah.

September 10:30am service launch!

After many months of running the 10:30am service online only, we have taken the decision to move the service back into the building on Sunday 5th September! We have been praying and discerning what our return is going to look like and feel God is saying that we are to do some things differently from how they have been done before. Our values at St Andrew's of fellowship and community – and accessibility to all ages – have led us to make the decision to make our services multi-generational, with interaction and participation for all ages. We believe the younger generation has been particularly hit by the closure of churches and the move online in our worship, and in this next season we feel that it is vital that we invest in our children and young people in particular.

The PCC is investing in some technical equipment to enable us to continue to live-stream our worship on Facebook so that we can continue our presence online.

We are conscious that we are still facing a situation where taking precautions is important and we will reassess the situation through August as to what measures we will ask people to follow from 5th September onwards. Currently at our 9am service, we have maintained social distancing, taking contact details for test and trace, and are encouraging people to continue wearing masks. We are not yet singing indoors, and communion is distributed to people in their seats in one kind only (just the wafer). We will keep these measures under review and communicate again if there are any changes.

Having said all of that, we are thrilled to be able to offer this opportunity to be together again in the building and would like to extend the invitation to you all. We are planning an exciting service on the theme of the great banquet and the invitation of Jesus – plus we'll be praying and commissioning those returning to school, both children and adults! If you have any questions about the service, or want to know more, please be in touch. Further publicity, details and ways to invite others will follow in the weeks ahead!

Please help!

Considering the news above of us opening church for the 10:30am service in September, we are looking to begin to recruit some teams of people to serve in church to enable it to happen. Church in its true meaning was never meant to be me (or John Potts) sitting behind a computer with some participation of others via pre-recorded material (for which I am very grateful!), church is about us being a body together and each one of us playing our part. I know and understand that many of you have struggled to engage online, especially in recent months. In all honesty I have struggled to stare at a computer screen each Sunday, so I understand. The reason I believe we have all struggled is because we haven't been able to all play our part, to worship alongside each other or to share the experience of being church. There is a risk that Sunday church online has become a spectator sport. We would like to invite you to stop being a spectator, and to come and help to make the services happen. We have several roles that are needed, as detailed below, and our ideal is that each rota runs on a four-weekly cycle – the more people who sign up, the more possible this will be. Please get in touch with Sue for more details.

Service Coordinator: On hand to assist and act as liaison with the service leader and speaker, and deal with any issues that arise during the service.

Welcomer: To greet people as they arrive, deal with any minor queries, and support the Service Coordinator.

Media Desk: Full details and training given on request. Please don't be put off by the vast array of buttons and switches, we only use a tiny fraction of these! If you're a competent computer user we can show you everything you need to know.

The Star Café

The Star café is proving to be a great success, well done to all the team!

Café opening hours have been changed slightly to line up with the busiest periods and we are now opening 9:30am to 12:30pm. Children and families are welcome; you might want to bring a picnic blanket for babies and small children.



There is still space for a few more people on the team, particularly to cover while people are on holiday. Please get in touch if you could spare a few hours to keep this fantastic outreach ministry running, either via the office or directly to Pam, Lynn or Steve.

Food Donations



We are still accepting donations of food to give to those in need – requests have increased in recent weeks. We can accept any non-perishable food (tins, packets, and cartons) and drinks like jars of coffee, tea bags, long life juice etc. Donations can be brought to church on Sundays or during café opening hours, or please contact James or Sue to arrange another time.

Holidays

This summer, please note that several of the team are taking some time off and won't be contactable. These dates are not necessarily indicative of being away, so you may see them around, but they are on leave and not working, so please be patient if they take longer to respond than usual too.

For any admin matters, contact Sue as first port of call who will forward issues on to the relevant people if needed. For pastoral issues, contact James, Tom or Sarah or contact the wardens if you need to get hold of us in an emergency.

For buildings or services related issues, contact the wardens primarily.

Parish Boundary Prayer Walk

Tom is planning to walk and pray the parish boundary this summer and would love some folk to join him. It will take a couple of hours and a date has not been set yet. Please contact Tom if you'd be interested in joining him: tom@standrewssneydgreen.com or 07383 920702

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