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Dear Friends,

***Money, money, money***

*Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies (Romans 6:12-)*

During this past week businesses have continued to collapse under the strain of Covid-19. From the beginning of this pandemic our politicians have had to carefully balance the cost in human life and the economic well being of our nation knowing that the two are nearly wedded to each other. A year ago who could have predicted the economic collapse of so many brand names and smaller businesses due to a virus?



I am delighted to confirm that this week our churches will reopen for private prayer. On Tuesday, Thursdays and Saturdays from 9am until 11am Christ Church will be open - do come to be still and pray in the church. St John's will open each Wednesday 2-4pm and on Sundays 9-11am. If you are not vulnerable yourself and are willing and able to join a rota of stewards to help ensure people are made welcome but also asked to maintain a safe distance from each other please contact me soon.

Subject to guidance from Welsh Government, the Church in Wales now hopes to permit those churches with the resources to manage re-opening safely to also do so for funerals and weddings from Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July. This news will delight many couples planning their weddings but sadly comes too late for Peter, our middle son, whose marriage to Lauren should have taken place this weekend. Like many couples, they have lost thousands in deposits for the venue, flowers, photography etc. In contrast April and Alex, whose banns we called just before lockdown and who had initially planned to be married here in April, are hoping their wedding in Christ Church might now take place in August. Other couples have deferred or cancelled their church weddings - all have spoken about how hard this has hit them both emotionally and financially. Please hold all affected by Covid in your prayers - there are so many "victims"



Picture taken on Peter & Lauren's engagement last year

This week, your Parochial Church Council members met (by Zoom) to talk over issues as we begin to reopen our churches. Our discussions, whilst focussing on distancing and hygiene were overshadowed by financial concerns. How, we wondered, can we reverse a projected loss of income of around £19,000 this year? We will never recoup the loss of hiring income, nor the loss of collections at baptisms, weddings, funerals and Sunday services. Reserves are depleting by thousands month by month and we move forward to an uncertain future depending only on those who continue to give by direct debit. Not surprisingly, discussions focussed on how or if we could reverse this trend. We asked ourselves many questions - should we have a Gift Day, what events could we organise to raise some funds, do we know individuals with fundraising expertise and should a group be formed to pursue this agenda? Unless we do something soon, the very fabric of our churches may suffer. Over the next five years we had intended to spend around £50,000 on our two churches to attend to concerns noted in our most recent Architect's Quinquennial Inspection and now we discover the boiler in Christ Church is probably past the point of no return. We may launch an appeal soon because nobody will want to return to an open but freezing church.

My attempts through the newsletter to alert you all to our financial difficulties whilst prompting a handful of generous donations has for the most part fallen on deaf ears. We all have our own problems right now and want to imagine this shortfall will just go away. Sadly it won't. The gradual

re-opening of our churches for private prayer, for small acts of worship and eventually for Sunday and weekday services, cannot and will not reverse our losses. Simple. "Stay alert", says Boris. Are you listening say I? If you care about your church perhaps you could review your giving to this parish and to the other charities you support as all of us have been affected by Covid. If you are in a position to do so perhaps you could join the GWADD (Giving With A Direct Debit) Scheme. This is the most efficient way to give and enables us to budget effectively. I would encourage you to find out more about this by emailing [auntiejuliee@hotmail.com](mailto:auntiejuliee@hotmail.com) or calling Julie Davies on 029 20842923. Would you be willing to give a one off donation to the church to support our mission and ministry and keep our buildings safe and sound for future generations? If you wish to make a one off donation, do send cheques to our Treasurer, Robert Williams, at 19 Close-y-cwarra, Cardiff, CF5 4QT (email: [williams\\_r11@sky.com](mailto:williams_r11@sky.com)), and indicating if you are able to GiftAid your donation please. If you have any ideas of how we could raise funds by running events to generate some income, or if would you like to join a Fundraising and Outreach group, do be in touch. Let's all play our part in ensuring we will be here in the years to come and our children and grandchildren will have the opportunity to worship in our churches. I am not scaremongering; we face significant challenges as do most parishes in the UK following lockdown. Please prayerfully think about these things remembering that over and over again Jesus spoke to his closest friends and those who surrounded him about giving, so often critiquing the richest and casually noting the generosity of the poor.

In this Sunday's gospel reading, (see Matthew 10:40-42) Jesus speaks about the welcome we give to others. We receive the blessing of those who speak God's words and live God's life when we welcome them and we are blessed when we give even a cup of cold water to the least among us. Jesus' words about hospitality remind us that, because all of human life reflects the image of God, all of our actions and all of our choices matter. You and I spend our lives making choices - what shall I eat tonight, what will I do today, where shall I shop, how shall I dress, how much should I give or spend etc, so it's very hard for us to get our heads around the writings of Paul for whom there is no choice. Paul is clear that our lifestyle choices define us so completely that slavery is the only way to describe the Christian's life. Paul believes that each time we choose to do one thing we reject another. Paul is clear you cannot have it all - Christians are called to live and give generously as our saviour did, remembering that the things we choose have the power to control us as much as if we were chained. Do have a look at Romans 6 to understand Paul's thinking for, whilst he likens us to slaves to God, he encourages us to see that God's redeeming love allows us to make the right choices and frees us from the ability to make those choices that harm. Paul believes the strength and passion involved in our choosing needs to be equal to or greater than all our other passions and potential life-style choices. John Donne (1572-1631), priest and poet, writes movingly about this,

*Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend  
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.  
I, like an usurp'd town to another due,  
Labour to admit you, but oh, to no end;  
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.  
Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,  
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;  
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.*

So what are your passions - perhaps your golf, your cycling, your retail therapy, good wine, friendship and family? Where is God in your list of loves? Chatting to Lauren, my daughter-in-law to be, we both realise there's so much we no longer yearn for and there are things we are both passionate about. Neither of us long to rush back shopping for clothes and the countless things we buy but don't really need and both of are passionate about her finding a way for her and my son to be married in church soon. I can hear some of you asking these young couples who don't attend their churches regularly and pay for their upkeep. But have you been a church goer all your life?

Do you have a passionate and all embracing relationship with God? I finally came to faith through the generous welcome of those who prepared me and Billy for our marriage, We are sowers generously, maybe even carelessly sowing seeds. Unlike the tennis club or the golf club I cannot raise your membership fee to make ends meet and I cannot reduce it due to Covid because there is no set membership fee to begin with! All I know is that from the day I fell in love with Jesus I've been passionate about our individual and collective need for God; whilst some allege they can be Christians without going to church, our buildings are a focus for that individual and collective need and are concrete signs of God's love in our communities.

God has given even life itself in his Son for me I try to give of myself that others can live.

Yours in Christ,

**Vicki**  
**X**

