**Services in the Presteigne Group of Parishes**

**February 2021**

***This is what we are planning, but plans can change…***

**Feb 7th** 11.00 Holy Communion (CW) Presteigne

Lent -2

**Feb 14th 9.15** Holy Communion (CW) Knill

Lent -1 11.00 Morning Prayer (BCP) Presteigne

**Feb 21st**  11.00 Holy Communion Presteigne

Lent 1 at the Beginning of Lent (CW)

**Feb 28th**  11.00 Holy Communion (BCP) Presteigne

Lent 2

**Mar 7th** 11.00 Holy Communion (CW) Presteigne

Lent 3

***CW*** *= Common Worship (modern language)*

***BCP*** *= Book of Common Prayer (traditional language)*

***Please remember …***

***\* two-metre-distancing must be maintained in church at all times***

***\* face coverings must be worn (unless you are exempt)***

***\* use the hand sanitizers provided***

***\* no mingling or socialising in the church or churchyard***

**Ash Wednesday – 17th February**

A Service of the Word

*(not Holy Communion)*

to mark the beginning of the penitential Season of Lent

will be held in St Andrew’s Presteigne at 10am.

**Everyone welcome.**

*All the usual Covid precautions and restrictions apply.*

**From the Registers**

**Funerals**

Gwyneth Iris McDonald Presteigne

Olive Mary Morris Presteigne

Jane Denise Gale Presteigne

***Our thoughts and prayers are with family and friends***

**Church Services Update**

At the time of writing, both the UK Government and the Welsh Assembly are permitting places of worship to remain open – both for private prayer and public worship. This means that churches and their clergy have been asked to decide for themselves whether or not they should remain open.

In the light of this, **Kinsham, Lingen and Discoed churches** have taken the difficult decision to **suspend** public worship for the time being –

though Lingen and Discoed remain open for private prayer.

This is mainly because the layout of their church buildings makes two-metre distancing difficult to maintain at all times.

**Knill** church will continue to hold its monthly Sunday service as the layout and numbers there make distancing much easier. It is open for private prayer too.

**St Andrew’s Presteigne** is remaining open for both private prayer and public worship, having the advantage of being a very large and flexible building in which it is a straightforward matter to keep to hygiene and distancing rules.

Every possible precaution is being taken to keep visitors and congregations safe with daily sanitizing of surfaces, the wearing of face coverings, two-metre distancing at all times, and our strictly observed “no mingling” rule. Congregational singing is not allowed, and the length of services is reduced.

Members of the public **are** permitted, under government regulations, to travel to attend worship, so there is no reason why parishioners who would normally attend other churches in the Group cannot attend Presteigne’s services if they would like to do so. But **everyone** **attending must be signed in** for track and trace purposes – giving their names and contact details.

We review the situation every week and follow closely the **updates on advice and regulation** from both national governments, from the Church of England, and from Hereford Diocese.

Of course, we recognize and entirely understand that some of our members and friends will not feel comfortable about attending worship in church at the moment, but since the start of Lockdown One I’ve been sending out **Short Sunday Services for Use at Home** along with weekly **Bible Readings** by email to around seventy people, and I can easily add others to the mailing list – please phone or email me if you’d like to receive them too.

For those who don’t do email, I print up the services and readings and deliver them weekly. Again, if you’d like to join my “paper round” list, please ask!

***Stephen***

***The Rector Writes…***

Here at the Rectory, we’re all great fans of the seasonal BBC TV programmes

**Springwatch**, **Autumnwatch** and **Winterwatch** – in which a brilliant team of naturalists, led by the estimable Chris Packham, remind us of the beauty of the British countryside and the wonders of its wildlife. For quite a few years now the show has treated us to amazing footage of the animal and plant life all around us – in our woodlands and pastures, in lakes, rivers and streams, on mountains,

in valleys and on the coast - augmented by fascinating facts and figures

about how it all works.

We’ve always loved “The Watches”, but last year and in the current series, we’ve valued them even more as they’ve brought the natural world into our home at a time when we haven’t been able to get out there into it due to our various lockdowns.

Of course, Covid has seriously impacted the way the programme is made and presented too, with the hosts and film makers having to stay pretty much in their own back yards. But there’s also been a noticeable change in emphasis in the

most recent editions as Chris and Co have spoken more and more about the physical, mental *and spiritual* benefits of getting out into the countryside and watching wildlife – even if we can only do so through our TV screens at the moment.

Each programme since Covid hit has included a “Mindful Moment” – a 90 second film without commentary and with no music except the song of the birds. Many of these short films have been absolutely beautiful, gently inspiring and deeply moving. They’ve been a very positive and valuable addition to the regular features of the shows, and I’ve found it fascinating (and very pleasing) that the **spiritual** benefits

we can all gain from the natural world have been brought to centre stage.

I’ve been especially intrigued (and again, very pleased) to hear the presenters using the word **“soul”** more and more – reminding us that being a part of the natural order and witnessing its wonders ***is good for the soul…***

**Of course, God’s people have *always* known this.**

In the Bible there are *countless* references to the created order; right from the Creation Story of Genesis, through the Books of the Prophets and the Psalms, and into the New Testament, there are accounts of God’s people finding comfort, joy

and inspiration in the natural world. Throughout the centuries since the Scriptures were written, many Christians have discovered just **how** ***good for the soul*** nature can be and how much closer to God their appreciation of his world can bring them.

One of my favourite Psalms is **Psalm 104** in which the writer casts his eyes and his mind around the wonder and majesty of the natural world. He sees the land and the seas, the mountains and the valleys, the forests and the fields, and all the creatures that live in them - from the greatest to the least. He meditates on the beauty of the world around him and learns so much *about the nature of God* from the nature of

the created order. And, deeply inspired, he responds to it all with joyful, heartfelt

worship and adoration – to which I, for one, say “AMEN!” -

***Praise the Lord, O my soul! Praise the Lord!***

***Stephen***