



# The Gauzebrook Group of Churches

LOVING GOD, LOVING NEIGHBOUR

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## Going forward to normal...

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We are days away from Easter and we see the signs of spring all around us. Whilst we will be having a second Easter without a service in any of our churches, there is a palpable sense of hope as the government has laid out for a number of steps towards greater freedoms on our activities.

I want to write to update you about two things, firstly our route out of lockdown in the Gauzebrook churches, and secondly about an initiative to capture our experiences of having been through the pandemic so that we can learn from them - I would be very grateful if you could make some form of response - more about that later...

### Church reopening

I am acutely aware that this is the question at the front of many of our minds at the moment - especially those of us for whom joining in on digital services has been impossible. If you haven't been able to join us on zoom I am genuinely sorry that the restrictions have made it so difficult for us to do more for you.

Obviously, I can't make any exact promises as to when things might happen as everything is subject to change but our aim, as it stands today, is to have services that feel 'normal' from the 23<sup>rd</sup> May, i.e. Pentecost (which is a great time for the (re)birth of the church!). The reason for that date is that it aligns with the government's anticipated timing for us to be able to mingle indoors, which we won't be able to do before 17<sup>th</sup> May at the earliest.

***In the meantime...*** three things:

- **during April** services will continue to be online only
- **during May** we will have some 'practice runs' in church for when we reopen (a few services across the group on the strict condition that we don't talk to each other indoors), alongside an online offering for those who don't feel comfortable coming into church yet
- **and throughout...** please could I encourage all of us to see that part of 'reopening the churches' is to take advantage of the outdoor 'rule of six'. We have all missed the after-church coffee and chat that we can't do online, so please think about the four or five people you've missed over the last months and invite them to get together for a socially distanced cuppa in the garden. If you would like to invite me so that I can get to know people I would love to come if I can. We are allowed to do this from now!

Keep an eye on the gazette for exact details as they come out.

### Experiences of the pandemic

We have been (and are still going) through a once in a century event. Each of us will have experienced this differently, each of us will have found some things difficult and so learned something about ourselves. We have all had to be creative in how we have responded to the restrictions that were placed upon us and that will have meant that we have had new experiences of what it means to be involved in church and community life.

There will have been things we have deeply missed - things that are precious to us. There will be things we have been glad to leave behind, and new things that we have discovered. Our priorities of what is and isn't important may well have changed. We must make sure that we capture this experience before we blindly go 'back to normal'. This is a unique moment of opportunity for us to go '*forward* to normal' instead, forward with a deeper understanding of what we have learned.

So I am inviting you to submit your experiences to us (and please, please do that if you are able - it will make a difference). Your submission might be a list of pros and cons, or a poem, a picture, a video or audio recording, in fact anything at all that expresses your experience of the last year - be as creative (or not) as you like. What have you learned that we shouldn't forget?

You can submit your experience by email to: [spring@gauzebrook.org](mailto:spring@gauzebrook.org)  
or by post to: **The Deanery Office, Old Squash Court, Holloway, Malmesbury, SN16 9BA**

By making a submission you agree for it to be seen by the small team who are collating and processing all the responses (this includes me) and it may be included in a report of our findings. We will **not** publish the names of those who have made a submission. If you would not like what you have submitted to be included in the report, please mark it as *confidential* and we will treat it as such... but we do want to hear about your experience anyway.

I do hope you will feel able to both invite some people round for fellowship as we wait for in-person services to get going, and I really look forward to seeing what you submit to us.

With all love and blessings as we fix our eyes on the perfecter of our faith this Easter,



The Revd Adam J Beaumont  
Rector, Gauzebrook Group of Churches