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30th August 2020

Dear Friends

We have just had four weeks of services in church, following the strict guidelines as laid down by the House of Bishops and in line with Government advice. Services have felt very different, with limited numbers and no movement, singing, or mixing together before or afterwards in the building, but it's a start towards what we are used to, and it has gone very smoothly.

From next Sunday we plan to be able to accommodate more people while still keeping to the guidelines and so you will no longer need to book beforehand. This means that if you plan on coming, we advise you to arrive in good time, in case we reach full capacity and reluctantly have to turn people away.

Our online service will continue each Sunday as well.

The details of the services in church starting 6th September are:

- **There will be one service in church each Sunday in September at 10.30 am.**
- **It will be a simple service; people will be asked to remain in their seats and not move around.**
- **Members of a household may sit together in the same pew, otherwise you will be asked to sit in a single pew, even if you come with friends.**
- **No booking is required but if all the available space is taken you may be turned away, so come early.**
- **Face-coverings must be worn at all times while in church.**
- **There will be a form (and a pen) in each pew; each person must complete the form to register their contact details for Track and Tracing purposes.**
- **If you or anyone in your household is unwell please don't come.**

It's worth noting that, although this is the plan for September, arrangements are still contingent on us getting volunteer support each Sunday, so please contact us if you feel you could assist; also that plans may be subject to change, so please keep checking with us.

What a journey we have been on through this year!

It's a journey none of us expected a year ago and it's a journey into the unknown.

The experience of the pandemic has felt a bit like a journey through a wilderness, and travelling through a wilderness can be tough and can feel dry, exhausting and discouraging.

Yet it is possible for us to emerge from such an experience stronger when we get to the other side – and there's nothing like encouragement and company to help us cope and keep moving along.

That's why the words of this hymn are so good, and they can be a prayer for September as we look to travel together and help no one feel on their own.

*Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too.*

*We are pilgrims on a journey, fellow travellers on the road;
we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.*

*I will hold the Christ light for you in the night time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.*

*I will weep when you are weeping; when you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow till we've seen this journey through.*

*When we sing to God in heaven, we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together of Christ's love and agony.*

But I'm also sure that in a wilderness, there's joy for all at seeing an oasis. Please pray for every step forward as a church, that each development in opening up may be like an oasis, bringing new life to weary souls and where all who come are refreshed and recharged.

Finally, let's pray we follow God's lead together in perhaps some new ways of being church. A sign seen in Calderstones Park puts it well: 'Be a part of the next chapter'

This comes with my love and prayers.

God bless.

Kip