

The good news is that this report will be brief.

Due to the nature of this last year, and the lateness of our last ACM much of what was said then, still remains active in our minds and our aspirations.

The moving into Tier 4 and the subsequent third lockdown, though not totally unexpected, came as a bitter blow to the work that had been going on behind the scenes to create opportunities for us to worship in some familiar ways through Christmas and into the New Year and towards an early Lent. This however, wasn't to be.

I am once again indebted to all those who worked behind the scenes in making preparations, in guiding and directing a right and appropriate response during this time and into the third lockdown. And to those who have kept us well fed and watered spiritually, during times of uncertainty and darkness, and to those who have pastorally cared for, and supported our congregation. Sharing with Sharon and I, the care of our brothers and sister, and of those in the wider community and very big thank you.

As we seek to open up and work with the Government Road Map, in my own mind I cannot see things being back to anything like the 'new normal' until 1st September at least. And I think we will need to see the time between then and now as a time to review, prepare and plan for the way ahead.

If the election we have just held, or rather not held, teaches us anything, along with the four emails and telephone calls I have already had this week, with people expressing their desire to stand down from various roles within our church life, things are different, and things are going to have to be different in church for a while. Our expectation of picking up where we left off, will not be possible.

Let me from the outset say I am not judging those who have stepped down and I thank you for the work and commitment you have shown in those roles. Without your care, diligence and support we would not have been able to offer and do the things we have done, and so we thank you, and many others like you.

However, as we move forward we may well see our base of volunteers reduce in numbers, with the fear of Covid a continuing reality, and the reappraisal of how our time is used and spent. Some will also rightly say that length of duty already offered, and age, are also now a contributing factor, and that I recognise.

There is an old adage in volunteering circles that states that 80% of the work is often done by 20% of the people. And whilst that figure isn't totally accurate when it comes to St Andrew's it is true that time after time, we often see the same faces volunteering, doing more, filling their time, and spreading themselves more thinly.

One wise clergyman once said to me that each Christian should get the balance right by looking outward, inward, and upward.

*Offer one **act of Service - outward**, look for one opportunity for **spiritual growth or development inwards**, and **regularly worship** with their brother and sisters on a Sunday, **upwards**.*

Churches rely very heavily on volunteers to support what it does. We see it as part of our Christian commitment and faith, an opportunity to use the gifts, skills and interests we have and which have been given to us by God to build his Kingdom and to make him known. Its part of what we call our mission, putting on groups like Open House or Friends Together, Pathfinders and New Gen to reach those who are on their own, or struggling, or who would value the company and regularity of a social event, with the added value of some faith sharing.

Never underestimate the importance of volunteering, and what you have to offer, but we all need to get it in balance with our own spiritual growth and development and our own worship with God. When we all get the balance right, when we all play our part, I believe there will be No shortages, I believe there will be No empty spaces, and there will be a better spiritual life balance, between us and God, and between the mission of our church and the worship of the God we long to introduce people to.

It is therefore, with this in mind, that Sharon and I have had early conversations about adopting the course that we used over Lent "*Fruitfulness on the Frontline*" as the basis of our road map as we move forward.

Its basic tenant, for those who didn't join us over Lent, is that we all have a Frontline from which we can, and probably are already sharing in some way our Christian faith. The frontline is of course the life, the places, and the people we share with others outside of our church life. Our frontline is how we spend the remaining 166 hours of the week when we are not with our church friends here on a Sunday. It is our mission field, and the place where God wants us to share with others the reality of our faith, by putting it into practice, and making it something attractive and life-changing. But it can also be how we model church here in the things we do and put on, how we greet and welcome those who come through the doors, and the priorities we place on the activities we host and offer.

Its based on 6 M's

Modelling Godly Character
Making good work
Ministering grace and love
Moulding culture

Being a **Mouthpiece** for truth and justice
And a **Messenger** of the gospel

I hope that you, like Sharon and I, want your life in faith to be fruitful, we hope that you want our church to continue to be fruitful as we seek to listen to God, push the doors, and follow wherever he leads. It is a task to which we are all called, as we all are the CHURCH, the gathered member of Christ, his body here on earth. And it requires us all to play our part as we move forward into a new world, with new opportunities.

Or to quote the Archbishop and his Easter address, **The church exists to be Jesus Christ to the world.**

As the resurrection bursts out of the tomb and floods the world so the church must go out with that torrent of good news and love, transformed, celebrating and declaring in word and deed the truth that death is a liar and that life is offered to all..... The overwhelming generosity of God to us should inspire the same by us, in everything from private acts of love and charity to international aid generously maintained. We have received overwhelmingly, so let us give generously.