

9th May 2021

Dear all

Vicar's letters are like buses. You wait for ages for one to come, then two come (almost) together.

The purpose of this letter is to share two particularly important items.

Firstly, much to my embarrassment, it had escaped my mind that this week is Christian Aid Week. As we can't do the usual house-to-house collections, it almost seems to have disappeared from our consciousness I've certainly seen no adverts about it. Christian Aid is due to lose a lot of its funding this year. I would encourage anyone who usually gives, especially if you give via an envelope, to consider giving online.

Dorothy Harriss, our local organiser, writes:

As Christian Aid Week approaches, I'd normally be persuading everyone to help fundraise in some way. As was the case last year, we are still very restricted in what we can do to both enjoy ourselves and raise money for this important Christian charity, celebrating 75 years of active service this year.

I have therefore created an e-envelope, through which you can, if you are able to, make a donation to help people in Kenya suffering not only Covid-19 but severe drought. They do not have the luxury of running water supplied to their home, nor are they likely to be offered a vaccine any time soon. With thankful hearts for the blessings we tend to take entirely for granted, I urge you to be as generous as you can be.

<https://envelope.christianaid.org.uk/envelope/the-deepings-ca-group?channel=copy>

The second is that, if you were at the service this morning, watching it online, or have read the parish magazine, you will have heard that Marriage Registers were closed for good in all churches and Register Offices – all registration will now be completed online. From now on, couples will sign a document, which will be sent to the Register Office to be entered onto an online system. They will also receive their certificates from there in due course.

This is a significant change in the role of the church, and we commemorated this with prayers during the service. Here are the information and prayers that I used this morning.

If anyone wants to know more about this, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

At the Closing of the Marriage Registers

Introduction

The Church has been closely involved in witnessing and solemnising marriages since the 11th century, and from the Reformation parishes were required to keep written records of all those married in their churches, a requirement formalised in Canon 70 of 1610, which remained in force until the 18th century. The Marriage Act 1836 provided for the duplicate green register books with which we are all so familiar, and whose use comes to an end today. For centuries it has been our privilege as a church, entrusted to us by the state, to keep these legal records of marriages. Herein have been recorded the acts of loving commitment made by successive couples, witnessed by their friends and family and recorded on their behalf by our clergy. In years to come the legal record of all marriages will be held nationally by the Registrar-General, but we shall still rejoice to welcome couples to marry here, and pray that God will bless and support them in their unions. Today we give thanks for the duty of record that has been ours.

A Prayer of Thanksgiving for Marriages

Almighty God, we thank you for the gift of love, and remember the many men and women who have stood in this place to make their vows to one another, and whose names are written in these registers [and those before them]. We thank you for all the joy and fruitfulness born of their marriages. We remember: Those whose faithfulness was lifelong and who are now at rest. Those who were widowed and bore long grief, or who married again. Those

whose marriages, begun in hope did not bring them joy, or which ended in ways they did not intend. We remember also the fathers, whose names are recorded here, and the mothers, whose names are not; the friends and relations who bore witness to the weddings, and the clergy who solemnised them. Give us grace to remember all that is past with thanksgiving and with love, committing to your care and healing sorrows which cannot now be changed in this world, but which will find peace through the grace of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

A Prayer of Thanksgiving for Records

God of order and peace, we thank you for the means by which the turnings of our lives are faithfully recorded, and for those who keep the records with diligence. For the means they offer for truth-telling and justice, and the record of memory of generations past. As we prepare to commit these records to the archives, help us to leave the past in your care, and renew our trust in your changeless mercy, that brings us life and wholeness in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for Marriages Yet To Come

Loving God, we pray for those who will come to this place to declare their love in time to come; for those planning weddings here in coming years, those whose love is yet unkindled and the generations still stored up in your bounty that they may live and love in the freedom of your creation. May this place be to them a sign that their earthly love is a sign of your eternal love, that raised Jesus Christ from the dead and that holds us in life until we come to the kingdom prepared for us in him. Amen.



Stay safe.

Blessings and love

Mark