

Just when you thought you knew where you were going...!

The first nine months of my curacy were going well, I was developing good relationships with Bosley school and we were building on plans to start a lunch time Bible club, the pre-school and I had been enjoying our monthly trips into church for Praise and Play and I was preparing to be involved in leading weddings and baptisms over the summer...

Then on the 23rd March 2020 my plans and those of the nation came to a screeching halt and all the work I had planned for the next few months was put on the shelf, and another set of challenges presented themselves. John (my vicar) and I quickly realised that the churches were going to have to be closed for public worship for quite some time and we needed to move our services online. There followed about a week of researching and learning how to set up a YouTube channel and how to use Facebook Live and the joys of CCLI streaming licences and copyright laws! We started doing Compline live every evening from the living room and I recorded some stories and songs for Praise and Play. John and his wife Judith started presenting live worship online, we had some interesting and fun times developing and honing our presenting skills.

I was Priested 4 months later than planned on the 3rd October in a very small service at Chester Cathedral, by Bishop Mark in his first Ordination, (although it was the third of the day, as we were ordained in small groups) and Bishop Keith in his last, which was very special. Despite not being able to have all my friends and family there, it was a very memorable day made more so by the intimate surroundings and Paul and the girls having ring side seats which was lovely for them. I know people from Astbury watched the live feed of the service and I received some lovely messages, thank you. (Technology has had such a big impact on how we do things since the pandemic started, my family in the USA were able to watch the service, which pre Covid they would not have been able to do.)

I led my first communion service on the 4th of October, the first day we opened the church since the beginning on the lockdown, and I led my second at the beginning of November, the day we closed the church for the second lockdown. As you can imagine Christmas was very different to usual as quite a bit of my work involves visiting our schools and this has not been possible. So for me, there were no Christmas parties, no Christmas lunches and no nativities, which was a change to the previous year when I attended seven! We reopened St James' for four weeks up to Christmas but then closed again in the new year and we have just reopened again last Sunday for Mothering Sunday.

It has been a strange year, when I have not been able to do many of the things a second-year curate would do, such as taking funerals, or presiding at weddings and baptisms, but I have set up and managed our YouTube channel and streamed services live from the living room, and as a family we recorded hymn music, readings and prayers for online services.

It was not the year we had planned, John and I, at the start of my curacy, but it has been an interesting year, during which I have learned so much.

I hope that you are all well and look forward to a time when we can meet up for a chat and a coffee.

