

June 2022  
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Old Church House,  
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Dear

The joyous celebration of our Queen's 70 years on the throne is at an end and it is the day after the Platinum Jubilee. It is cold and nothing like a June day but the warm thoughts of the last few days are still sharp in the memory as I sit down to write the annual letter. The Jubilee has been a glorious thing to define our return to an almost normal way of living. There are still precautions to take and for those of us still vulnerable to Covid, masks to wear and obligatory for all in some settings, BUT, we are seeing each other again and what a joy this has been. We have all realized, I think, that nothing replaces actual physical contact with each other and just how precious that is.

We here have remained Covid free, largely because I had to isolate but members of our family did contract it, including our prematurely arrived baby grandson who was born last year. We are thankful that they all recovered well. Our grandson has since been baptized in the dear old church on 14th May this year, just shy of his 1<sup>st</sup> birthday, on a gloriously warm and sunny day. The old church was filled with clouds of cow parsley and candles, the beautiful, copper font sang out of the diffused light and the honeysuckle on the porch was in full bloom; it could not have been a more perfect day in every respect.

Visitors to the old church have increased apace since Easter and things are certainly beginning to pick up, though the cold weather we have had of late has dampened things somewhat. One wonders how things returned to anything like normal in centuries gone by after the plague times and the various epidemics and pandemics that afflicted England and the rest of the world. The further back in time you go, one imagines that life must have been very slow in picking up after the deaths of so many people. Indeed, food must have been in very short supply with a huge reduction in those available to till the land for future harvests. The old church must have played its part during the desperately sad events of those times. Awful though this pandemic has been, we are grateful that we live now and not in centuries past.

Sadly, the old church will have witnessed down all the centuries of its survival many of the things which are ongoing today. Apart from the pandemic, war has reared its awful head again and we are all holding Ukraine and her people in our hearts and prayers. It was so good to see how many of the British people opened their homes to some of the refugees and for some it will have brought back memories of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World war; doubtless, our Queen amongst those old enough to remember. In the visitors book here, I see time and again the same words written – ‘..peace, stillness, simplicity..,’ and surely in times like these, when options for concrete help are often few and events seem beyond our control, the opportunity of being able to sit quietly in an ancient church, close to God in the stillness, affords us the chance to give all these things up to Him. During those times when the world seems impossible to understand or sort out in our minds, lifting it all up to God is the most powerful thing we can do. Down all the centuries gone before us, how many people, grateful for having survived or lifting the souls of those they loved up to God, came to the door of Old

St. Bartholomew's - bringing their joy to share with Him or bringing their heartbreak to put in His loving hands? For us and for those around the world today it is just the same, whether it be for a pandemic or a war. Still, in these ancient, quiet places, God is in the middle of it all, stretching out His hands to those of us in need and therein lies the peace needed by so many – as much today as ever it was.

After an absence of 2 years then, I write inviting you to join us once again for the Annual Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving for the Life of Old St. Bartholomew's Church here at Lower Sapey. It will be so good to see each other after such a long time and though I've had eMail contact with many of you over the last 2 years it will be wonderful to see you in person, if you are able to join us. May I ask that for those joining us, you are triple jabbed against Covid – Many thanks.

This year our service will be taken by The Venerable, George Howe, retired Archdeacon of Westmorland and Furness. He and his wife joined us in the congregation in 2019 on what was a really hot day, with so many people attending we couldn't get everyone in! George, has had a particular interest in working closely with other denominations during his ministry and was a member of the Council for Christian Unity. As such he will fit in perfectly with Old St. Bart's wide family and we look forward to welcoming both he and his wife, Jane, to the service.

This year the Bank Holiday Sunday falls on 28<sup>th</sup> August and the service will begin at the usual time of 3pm. Do please bring a picnic chair to sit on during the service if you can and your packed tea for the picnic afterwards. There will be some chairs for those without one ~ thanks to Pat Cave. This year's music will be provided once again by Vital Spark. They were last with us in 2018 on a day when the rain just kept on coming but their music and singing was wonderful. They will also sing before and after the service. Parking will be as directed on the day - thanks to Dr. Susanna and Mr. Allen Everitt once again. If anyone has difficulty walking then please park in our yard for easier access (please tel. or eMail, to arrange this and arrive early on the day). Non disabled toilet facilities are available as usual.

Each of you is most warmly welcome then, whether you are old friends or new, as are any family and friends you may like to bring with you, to share in this most special of days in the dear old church's year.

My kindest regards to you all and I look forward to welcoming you on:

Sunday 28th August at 3pm

for the Annual Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving

for the life of

Old St. Bartholomew's Church, Hope Lane, Lower Sapey, WR6 6HE (plus 1/2mile!)

Pat Prosser

