



Praying Together



*Singing
Number nineteen
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Dear Friends,

I hope this letter finds you all well. We are still in strange times and most of us are trying to navigate our way through the advice and guidance which still continues to affect our lives. These often seem confusing and contradictory, but we must continue to 'do our bit' to keep ourselves safe and avoid risk to others as much as possible.

One of the things I have found most difficult in returning to worship in our church is the fact that we cannot sing. We have been listening and watching some beautiful recorded music and wonderful singing on our screen. Lynda Bebbington played the organ for us last Sunday for the first time, but we are still, as yet, unable to join in ourselves, and for those of us who like a good sing, this is very frustrating! Apparently, we can hum, but this is not quite the same!

Music and singing have always played an important part in our worship in church. Throughout the Bible we find reference to singing and playing instruments to praise God. He wants to hear our songs of praise and adoration. The Psalms were written to be sung and singing is also a good way of remembering things. How many hymns and their verses do you know off by heart? More than you think I imagine.

Singing is good for us in many ways. Research has shown that singing in a group is good for us physically and mentally, it creates a strong sense of well-being. The University of Oxford have studied this and found that *"music making exercises the brain as well as the body, it is beneficial for improving breathing, posture and muscle tension, it can help with pain relief through the release of natural endorphins and there is also some evidence that it can play a role in sustaining a healthy immune system"*. The article goes on to say that *"people feel more positive after actively singing than they do after passively listening"*.

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/choir-singing-improves-health-happiness-%E2%80%93-and-perfect-icebreaker>

I am also mindful of those whose livelihoods depend upon performing. Those involved in the performing arts must be finding life very difficult and isolating at this time. Perhaps we could remember them in our prayers this week.

It was difficult to choose a Psalm on this subject as there was so much choice! However, I have chosen this one and let us hope, that when we can once again sing together, the Lord thinks we are making a joyful noise!

Psalm 98: verses 1 and 4-6

*O sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvellous things.
His right hand and his holy arm have gained him victory.*

*Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.
Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody.
With the trumpets and the sound of the horn
Make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD.*

I would encourage you to sing praises in your homes, particularly as there are so many health benefits! Have a good old sing-along and see how you feel!

Let us Pray:

O Christ, whose birth was greeted with the song of angels,
whose mother sang as she magnified the Lord,
and who was greeted in the Temple by the song of Simeon,
we thank you for the gift of music.

For music which calms our fears,
lifts our hearts,
speaks to our souls,
and takes us beyond words
into the presence of your joy.

Give us, O Lord,
a deeper love for this language of praise;
that in its light we may see your light,
and in its glory, find your glory,
O Christ our life, our love,
our endless song. Amen *(from 'With you is the well of life' by Patrick Woodhouse)*

*"Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness;
come into his presence singing". (Psalm 100: 1-2)*

Ali, on behalf of St Michael's Church, Marbury