

I'm writing this the day after the Government's road map back to some sense of normality in everyday life, hopefully by mid-June this year.

Mid-march sees the first anniversary of the first lockdown, and Mothering Sunday was the first livestreamed service with no people present in church. A whole year has passed, with many in our parishes having suffered the effects of Covid themselves, some with the long term health consequences of long covid, others mourning the death of loved ones and funeral services limited by numbers and content due to the pandemic. Local businesses have been disrupted, and those working from home and parents helping children learn from home (and often both at the same time!) have all added to mental health issues. Now we have vaccines, numbers of deaths are declining, all children will be returning to school and there seems to be light at the end of this very dark tunnel.

We are now well into the season of Lent – some might say it's dark time in the church calendar, although I would instead describe Lent as a return to the self-discipline which draws us away from the busyness of life, and to reflect on our need to rely more fully on God. This has been true throughout this past year for many of us within the life of the church. It's not too late to engage with the Lent resources on the church website <https://www.pcd.org.uk/services/-journey-through-lent/> especially the focus on reading the bible and 40 days of self-care.

Following the Government's roadmap, I'm excited to say that we plan to resume public worship on 14th March - this year's Mothering Sunday with services at 10am in St Mary's Downe and 11am in Cudham church. Historically Mothering Sunday was more about returning to 'mother church' rather than giving flowers to mum, so this theme is particularly relevant this year as we resume worship together. For the moment, there will still be a need to book in for services – please email admin@pcd.org.uk or leave a message on 01959 571515; we'll still be live streaming services for those who, for whatever reason, can't be there, and we are looking at ways to improve the technology too.

I look forward to seeing you all in church soon, as we look through the dark tunnel of Lent into the glorious celebration that isn't too far away at Easter as the Risen Lord Jesus is with us every step of the way.

Rev John Musson