



YORK MINSTER

June 2020

Dear Friends

Greetings from the Deanery in lockdown. I do hope you and yours are keeping safe, well and hopeful during this testing time for ourselves, our neighbours and indeed for the Nation. At the time of writing I am delighted to say that plans are being made, albeit steady and incremental, to re-open York Minster. However small a step, it is movement in the right direction; I know that you will be heartened to hear this news.

Lockdown has given to each one of us an opportunity to discover or even to rediscover the true value of friends. I have been touched by letters of encouragement, text messages and the occasional Zoom call from friends. In a pre-Covid life which had a tendency to become too full it has been salutary to reconnect with friends near and far. The idea of friendship itself is one of the most accessible ways in which Jesus and the writers of the New Testament speak of God's life, presence and purposes in the world.

Jesus calls his first disciples and his 21st Century followers, friends. In one translation St Paul writes: 'Our message is that God was making all humanity his friends through Christ.' In other places the language of reconciliation, which draws from what happens when friends fall out and make up, is used to point to the Good News of all that God has done for us in Jesus Christ. It is one way of understanding the calling of the Church in the world, which we are to share in words and deeds, God's unstinting desire for friendship with everyone. Those of us who live, work and worship at the Minster have been learning afresh how to share our friendship and to discern God's friendship in lockdown.

Lockdown has meant change for us all no doubt: trips for shopping have had to be planned so much more carefully; vulnerable neighbours will need remembering; and fixed daily points seemed to evaporate overnight. For all of us lockdown has meant reduced contact with the Minster and for some the discovery of a worshipping community online (do explore the online resources at <https://yorkminster.org/whats-on/>). Friendships with one another which were so easy to maintain have had to be sustained at distance and with imagination.

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I am conscious too that the experience of lockdown has been uneven for many across our Nation. The death of George Floyd has heightened our sensitivity to inequalities, economic, racial or otherwise, in our Nation and World. Those who seek and pray for God's coming Kingdom of peace and justice will want to embrace and act upon the many challenges here. I know myself, for one, to be extraordinarily fortunate in being able to sit in a beautiful Deanery garden; when throughout the world overcrowded households have shared lockdown in cramped dwellings and without access to a garden. May I recommend for lockdown reading two paperbacks by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (The Spirit Level & The Inner Level respectively) two University of York academics and friends of the Minster.

How we need to share our life, and all that God has given us, with friends and neighbours. It was true for Jesus who had the Twelve and an inner circle of those who cared deeply for him, shared his life and stood by him in his hour of testing. I recognise the need for friends York Minster has in its own current time of testing. You will be aware that with the closure of the Minster to visitors we have experienced a devastating loss of income. This unwelcome reality has required the Chapter of York to make some hard decisions to ensure the Minster comes through its immediate challenges.

One of the hardest decisions has been to announce the proposed closure the Minster School at the end of the Summer Term. Perhaps some of you, dear friends, are former pupils, parents or members of staff. To each I want to express my regret and sadness at having to oversee the closure of the School. I do believe, however, that it is the right decision. I am anticipate working closely with St Peter's School as it becomes the Choir School for the Minster. I am confident that, by the grace of God, we will come through our current crisis; but I would ask you, Friends of York Minster, to keep us in your thoughts, friendship and prayers.

With best wishes and my prayers

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Frost". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

The Rt Revd Dr Jonathan Frost
Dean of York