**The Revd Alison M Bailie**

**Rector: Benefice of Middleton and Thornham**

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23rd September 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

Over the last couple of months, it’s been wonderful to welcome back new and familiar faces to both churches and to re-connect as a church family. As restrictions have relaxed, our experience of church has become much more ‘normal.’ We are able to sing, to chat and even have a ‘brew’ after the service. Simple things, but I doubt that any of us will ever take them for granted again. Most of all, it’s been wonderful to worship the Lord together as we used to do! Thank you for taking that leap of faith, and stepping into church once more.

If you’ve not yet returned to church, can I encourage you to think about coming back? We miss you, and would love to see you. Church is as safe as we can make it, and considerably safer than many venues, such as cafes and supermarkets. We understand that some people may not yet be ready, and that the personal circumstances of others may mean that it is not yet possible for you. Do be assured that you are in our thoughts and prayers and, when the time is right, we really look forward to welcoming you again. If there’s anything you’d like to chat about, do let me know. Whether in church or not, please remember that you are a much loved member of our church family.

As the restrictions have relaxed and life, including church life, is becoming more normal, it seems the right time to reduce the frequency of the Rector’s letters, which have been sent out more or less weekly during the pandemic. From now on, there will be a Rector’s letter once a month, beginning in October. For now, I leave you with the words of Psalm 121, a song which was sung by Jewish pilgrims on their way to worship at the temple of Jerusalem, and which reminds that wherever we are, at home, in church, in hospital or out and about, God watches over all our comings and goings. The Lord, who is always with us, is our help and our strength, moment by moment and day by day.

I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
    where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
    the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip—
    he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
    will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord watches over you—
    the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
    nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all harm—
    he will watch over your life;
the Lord will watch over your coming and going
    both now and forevermore.

May the Lord bless you and be with you in all your comings and goings this week.

With my love in Christ and my prayers

Alison

**Sunday 26th September 10.30**

St John’s 10.30 am All Age/Service of the Word

St Leonard’s 10.30 am All Age Service

Zoom 6.30pm Service of the Word

**Wednesdays 10.00-12 noon -** St Leonards open for private prayer