



Tuesday, 17 March 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Even in the last few days things have moved on considerably so I'm writing from my study to give you an update.

- We're following all the [Government](#) and [Church of England](#) guidelines and that means that there will be no Sunday services for any of our 6 congregations this week. Many will remember Mothering Sunday as a particularly special day of thanksgiving and celebration but this year it will have a very different feel.
- Virtually all our other meetings have been cancelled - please go to the St Nicholas [website](#) to check.
- We're focusing on two main areas at present within the staff team at present - organising pastoral care within the church family and making sure that all our communications systems are as robust as possible. We trust that these emails and the St Nicholas website are a really helpful resource, especially as we look forward to Sundays and the opportunity of live streaming services.

From my perspective as Rector I want to reinforce three key areas of our life as a church family:

Our Relationship with the Lord

- God's word reminds us that He is a Rock [see Isaiah 26:3,4] and that through the Lord Jesus we are dearly loved and precious in His sight [see Jeremiah 31:3]. Amid all our understandable fears, worries and anxieties we need to keep returning to the word of the Lord to gain an eternal perspective which gives us security and comfort. We aim to provide regular resources to help each other through these times and I am currently preparing a short video talk about times when we are fearful. The intention is to provide support and assurance. It may be the sort of video clip which you could forward to your friends or use to explain to younger children how we can find comfort in difficult times. I aim to record and send it round tomorrow. We are also aiming to livestream services this Sunday.
- Songs can be a great means of strengthening our faith by reminding us of key truths. I have found '[He will hold me fast](#)' enormously helpful over the last year, especially when I was in hospital last summer.
- We feel powerless against the coronavirus as it silently advances. The government is seeking to do all it can and use all available resources. But our trust is in the LORD our God



[Psalm 20:7]. Therefore we need to be praying - for the nation, for rulers, for our community, for our church family across the six congregations, for the vulnerable and for each other. Can I encourage us to **pray as a church family in our homes at 7.30pm each evening**? In due course we can provide resources for these regular prayer times. If that time doesn't work for you then select another time, but please join me in praying together!

Our relationship with each other

- How can we love each other 'at full stretch' [a personal translation of 1 Peter 4:8]? We need to be looking out for each other by phone, text and social media. Where there is particular need, either for yourself or for others within the church family, [please inform the church office](#).
- We especially need to remember some of our number who don't have access to email and websites. I know that some in the church family have already purchased stationary and stamps to write to others - what a great initiative! We must always especially remember the weak and the vulnerable.
- Another initiative is that some of the congregations are trying to establish a 'buddy system' where younger and more active church members are able to link up with those of us who are shut in. [If you would like to help, please let us know](#).

Our relationship with others

- Our instinct as believers in the Lord Jesus must be to consider the needs of others. Our friends and neighbours need to hear the gospel sensitively and lovingly applied to their circumstances. Once we have a few video messages available you might want to pass on one of them to a friend, especially if they are anxious or worried.
- We will want to find ways to show practical love and care. Perhaps we could purchase food for our local Foodbank? Just for information, we have had to cancel our order of flowers for Mothering Sunday - we have paid for the flowers at cost price and the florist is going to sell them and pass on all proceeds to the Hospice in the Weald, more details [on their website](#).

Finally a prayer from the Book of Common Prayer in the service for The Visitation of the Sick:

Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in him, to whom all things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, do bow and obey, be now and evermore thy defence; and make thee know and feel, that there is none other Name under heaven given to man, in whom, and through whom, thou mayest receive health and salvation, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Warmly in Christ,

Angus