

19th March 2020

Dear Church Members and associates,

I am writing to update you on the church's response to the outbreak of Coronavirus.

Suspension of Public worship

On the 17th March I received a letter from our Archbishops Sentamu and Justin stating that, 'public worship will have to stop for our season'. Public worship is central to the life of the church and so it is with a heavy heart that I am seceding to this. I recognise that these are unique circumstances and that this is the right course of action as do the wardens of the church. Therefore, as of now all events in the church diary are either postponed or cancelled including our worship services on a Sunday.

We have though been encouraged to keep our churches open for private prayer. On Sunday the 22nd March the church will be open from 9am until noon for any of you who want to pray and worship God. Please use the hand sanitiser provided on entering and leaving the building, keeping a sensible distance apart from any other parishioners praying. The church will also be open on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 10am until noon for any who want to offer up their prayers.

Our Archbishops are encouraging a day of prayer and action this coming Sunday – Mothering Sunday 22nd March. Please join them in prayer and action on this day remembering particularly the sick and anxious. They write, 'As one action, we are calling on everyone to place a lighted candle in their window at 7pm as a sign of solidarity and hope in the light of Christ that can never be extinguished'.

A prayer for those affected by Coronavirus

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

Caring for Each Other

During these coming weeks we need to be particularly mindful of others in our church and community. If any of you have any kind of need please do contact Olwyn Powell our pastoral coordinator or me. Olwyn can be emailed on opowell@opowell.plus.com or phoned between 9am and 10pm on 0121 748 7621. So, if you are running short of a certain food, other day to day essentials (such as toilet roll) or would simply like to talk please do be in touch. God made us to be relational beings first to him and then each other. Many of us will be self-isolating and I am concerned for our mental well-being during this time.

I hope and believe that you will all be mindful of your neighbours at this time particularly those advanced in years and the vulnerable.

A different sort of Church

As we respond to the coronavirus crisis, we are called to become a different sort of church for a time. Still together but apart. The Archbishop of Canterbury Justine Welby will lead a national broadcast at 8am on the 22nd March, Mothering Sunday. I believe this will be broadcast on BBC Radio 4. Please see this link for more details: -

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/archbishop-canterbury-lead-first-national-virtual-church-england-service>

My Hope and Prayer

During this pause in our usual patterns of life it is my prayer and hope that many will be drawn into the love of Jesus Christ. That Christians will know themselves growing in the faith. That others will know themselves coming to faith in Jesus Christ. John tell us why he wrote his account of the life of Jesus Christ. He wrote, 'But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.' John 20: 31. My hope is that people across Water Orton and the Country will come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah. Our Vision as a church is 'To Worship God, grow believers and make believers'. That during these coming weeks this would become a greater reality.

I look forward to the day when once more we can be together and worship together.

God Bless you all

Love

Paul