Dear Friends in Christ

By now many of you will heard that the Church of England has suspended all public worship and called on churches to ‘face the challenge posed [by COVID-19] by becoming a radically different kind of church rooted in prayer and serving others.’

Our Great St Mary's church building will remain open for private prayer, and we will be livestreaming prayers daily, but all services, rehearsals, recitals, and in-person meetings have been suspended.

I can say, truly, that these are the strangest days of my ministry. We need to draw deep in these days on the wells which years of prayer and worship have filled. Being a priest does not make it any easier, I can assure you. But I take strength from knowing the God is good, that Christ once crucified is alive, that his Spirit is always at work, and that he calls us now to be his people in a new way. I am powerfully struck that we find ourselves in the wilderness - it makes for a very real kind of Lent. And the wilderness is a frightening place, but also a place where God leads his people, by day and by night. It was not easy. There was testing. Even isolation. But they were never without Him. And nor are we. Ever.

We continue as a community of prayer and service, albeit in a new form as we put public worship on hold. We will be live-streaming worship on Facebook Live:

- Morning Prayer weekdays 9am
- Compline at 9pm, starting next week
- Sundays join us for online worship at 9.30am.

You can view all these at facebook.com/GreatStMarys. You don't need a Facebook account to see these services on your web browser. Email Revd Devin if you've any questions about online services.
Over the next two weeks, the clergy will be telephoning everyone on the Electoral Roll. Revd Shirley is compiling a list of the members in our congregation who are most vulnerable. In order to ensure that clergy do not spread infection between households, the Archbishop has instructed clergy to not make home visits except in cases of great extremity. However, do know that in case of emergency, you can always reach a member of our clergy team on our Pastoral Emergency phone 01223 747277.

What can you do at this time? First and foremost, pray. Pray without ceasing, our Lord taught us, and pray without anxiety. How well we know now that sufficient unto the day are the troubles of today: So step away from the constant news updates and turn to Christ. Hold in your prayers the most vulnerable, hold in your prayers first responders, medics and all the helpers; hold in your prayers your own self, knowing that God is always with you and loves you no matter how you’re feeling. Look after your spiritual, physical, and mental health. Reach out and telephone friends, colleagues, acquaintances. Follow sound medical advice — even if you think you're invulnerable, don't be a cause of infection to others. Support your local foodbank and other groups helping the most vulnerable, and your local shops. Trust in God's love even when all seems dark.

Great St Mary's will remain open for private prayer, although Michaelhouse is now closed. Visit our new 'Share a Prayer' page you would like to light a virtual candle and offer a prayer from home.

Later this week you'll receive the eMag, with information about our daily online services, the Archbishop of Canterbury's upcoming radio worship service (8am Sunday on local BBC radio), and other resources helping us to be a community together, socially distant but spiritually close. Be sure to add news@gsm.cam.ac.uk to your address book, to make sure you're getting the eMag in your inbox.

- If you have health concerns and for the latest health advice, please visit the NHS website.
- For the latest Government advice and action plan, please visit GOV.UK.
- The Church of England's guidance for churches can be found here.
  Please also visit their page of prayers about the outbreak.

I look forward our sharing in Morning Prayer online weekdays at 9am, and this Sunday at 9.30am with a brief sermon from myself, followed by an online Mothering Sunday Eucharist led by Revds Helen and Shirley.

I'm conscious that not everyone in our church family is online. If you know a friend or neighbour without an email account, it would be wonderful if you called
and shared this letter with them.

Keep us, good Lord
under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, a
nd lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Yours in Christ

The Reverend Canon Adrian Daffern
Vicar of the University Church and Fellow of Lucy Cavendish College

Feast of St Joseph of Nazareth
19 March 2020