

Dear All,

As I can't be with you this morning, before you start your service this morning, I want to share with you what is going on behind the scenes to make sure we deal with the Coronavirus outbreak to the best of our ability.

Incumbents do receive regular updates from the Church of England as well as from Martin, our Diocesan Bishop. It is reassuring that they have well regarded specialists advising them. In addition we are fortunate to have a retired consultant microbiologist in our deanery, who can reliably answer any question we have.

The guidance drawn up and the decisions taken, aim in particular to help protect the more vulnerable members of our communities. Whilst we cannot give any guarantees that everything will be fine, there is a lot all of us can do to help the efforts to curb the spread of the virus.

Following the advice given, the following measures are therefore in place until further notice.

* We have tried to provide hand sanitisers and tissues near the church entrance. As they are for now simply not available in the shops, please wash your hands before and after the service as a second best option. If you have your own sanitiser make use of these as you enter church and after the service.

* We share The Peace in spoken form only and refrain from shaking hands.

* Communion will be distributed in one kind (bread) only. We will receive standing rather than kneeling to avoid leaning on the communion rail.

* Refreshments after services are suspended.

As a church community we are called to look out for our neighbours. I therefore ask

* for people to follow hygiene procedures.

* for us to be generous and avoid stockpiling.

* to be aware of those who are vulnerable, keep in touch by phone or email and help keep up morale by positive support and encouragement.

* not to add to people's concerns by scaremongering. Be present with a listening ear and help in simple practical ways.

If you feel vulnerable yourself and want to talk about your concerns, please pick up the phone and call me. Please do not feel in any way guilty in the event that you decide that to stay away from church is best for you. If you are not infectious, do let me know if you would like to receive home communion.

In the week ahead, I will gather materials and resources for those who choose to worship at home. This information will be available in church and on the website before the coming weekend.

For now, let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you taught us to love our neighbour,
and to care for those in need
as if we were caring for you.

In this time of anxiety, give us strength
to comfort the fearful, to care for the sick,
and to assure the isolated
of our love, and your love,
for your name's sake.

Amen.

With my love and prayers for you all,

Liesbeth