

Dear Brothers and Sisters in St Mary's,

Anne has mentioned on the Pew Sheet a new Rector's Letter. Well, here it is!

Obviously, these are very strange and anxious times, and we will all have our own particular concerns and stresses, but I think it's very important that we try to hold together as a community. Please use [our website](#) regularly to keep in touch if you can, even if you weren't previously a frequent website visitor. You will find several new features:

- The regular Sunday service, and some special ones for Holy Week and Easter, under the heading **Virtual Worship**. Try to use these at home, either alone or with others, ideally at one of the times we would have come together in church (8 am or 10 am on Sunday; 7.30 pm on Maundy Thursday and 2 pm on Good Friday). If those times aren't possible for you, of course you must feel free to use them at other times. God isn't limited by chronology, and the prayer and the life of the church is part of an eternal continuum. These services are being prepared in turn by members of our clergy and LLM team, and also by Pam Richardson who is authorised as an Occasional Preacher by the Bishop. They will contain a little 'sermon' each week as well as prayers, and a moment of 'spiritual communion', when we can reflect and give thanks for the fact that the fruits of Christ's passion, and his presence at the heart of our lives, are given to us in response to our heartfelt desire, even though we cannot receive Holy Communion physically. Of course, we all look forward to the day when we shall be able to do so again, but meanwhile, we can dwell in him, and he in us, through faith.
- Coming soon on the website – **Passiontide Promise** – a form of short Morning Prayer we can all say together, if possible around 8 am, in these coming two weeks up to Easter. Thank you to David Parry-Smith for preparing this.
- There is also a page of other **Prayer Resources** which you may find helpful, including the opportunity to join in live-streamed daily worship from Great St Mary's in Cambridge and links to the Church of England's national prayer resources.
- We hope soon to have our **Parish Prayer Board** up and running, on which specific prayer requests can be posted (with appropriate permission). This prayer board will include requests sent by members of the wider community who would like to feel that church members are praying for their concerns. **Please send your prayer requests directly to Anne (admin@stmaryslinton.org.uk) rather than to me**, to cut out an unnecessary step between request and the posting. We will aim to keep specific prayer requests on the prayer board for a fortnight. If there is anything Anne is uncertain about posting, she will of course consult me, but I'm sure that within the church family we can all use our good sense about what is appropriate. (If people want to send prayer requests specifically for my attention only, of course, you can email or ring me about them. I am saying Morning and Evening Prayer daily, and will remember them then.)
- Whilst on the subject of prayer within the church family, we hope you will feel supported by knowing that members of the Ministry Team are undertaking prayer for everyone on St Mary's Electoral Roll over the course of each week.
- We are also starting a section on the website (accessed by the Resources button) of **Things to lift your spirit**. Again, we invite your contributions. They can include links to items on the internet which you have found inspiring or cheering and which you would like to share with others. It might also include little observations of your own – specifically things like 'Nature notes': as Spring advances, we can stimulate each other to look and listen-out for specific things in our gardens or on our daily exercise outings which will help us feel in touch with God's wonderful creation: for starters – look out for buzzards overhead and kites in the direction of Bartlow... I saw yellow butterflies dancing in the garden on March 24th, as well as ladybirds and bumble bees. ...Why not stop whenever you hear a bird singing and try to spot where and what it is? Other items on the **Things to lift your spirit** page might include quizzes and activities which members of the congregation can send in, to keep us busy mentally while we're physically confined. **As with the**

Prayer Board, please send your contributions, whatever they are, directly to Anne (admin@stmaryslinton.org.uk) who will post them when she has a few minutes to do so.

Anne is working very hard for us, for which we thank her very much. We have advertised that we **offer a telephone support service** for anyone who is alone who might like a daily phone call, just to break their isolation and provide reassurance. Cathy Watts has kindly offered to be the hub, and to keep a record of who is caring for whom in this way so as to save Anne some extra work, **please send requests for this service, or offers to help with it, directly to Cathy if possible**(cathy.watts@stmaryslinton.org.uk) . (Any requests or offers which come in to Anne or me because of our original advertising will be forwarded to Cathy.)

I will try over the next week to get in touch with vulnerable or housebound members of our community myself: please forgive me for not being able to do this before. There has been a lot to set up, and things have moved and changed very quickly. I have also been involved with the Linton Temporary Food Bank, for which St Mary's is lending facilities. Michael Wilcockson and I are both doing regular stints for the Food Bank, processing donations before they are sent out, (which is being done very professionally, with proper stock-taking etc.). It is wonderful how generous local individuals and businesses are being – but also upsetting that there are households which need such help. Please continue to donate, either to the Linton Temporary Foodbank (in the porch of St Mary's between 9 and 11 on weekdays), or to Haverhill Foodbank (via the bin in the Co-op): both remain very good and necessary causes. I enjoy my work with the Linton Food Bank, and feel it is a good opportunity to be the 'public face of the church' with some wonderful volunteers from the village with whom we don't otherwise have contact. Please pray for this work.

If the food poverty situation in the UK concerns you deeply, you may wish to follow links to [Church Action on Poverty blog](#) to keep abreast of how this issue is affected by the current emergency. and what you might do about it. (Felicity is currently working for CAP, and many of you generously gave support CAP Sunday in 2019).

But of course, the whole world is affected by this current crisis, including many countries less able than ours to confront it. (Just imagine what it must be to live in a country which has recently battled its way out of an Ebola Emergency, whose health system must now try to help a poverty-stricken population through Coronavirus!) As members of a church which supports [Christian Aid](#) you may be interested in reading its blog on the subject, and on how we can go on supporting our brothers and sisters in the less developed world.

The notice on our Church notice board proclaims that *The church building is closed, but the church community remains alive and active*'. Let's make that true, in whatever way we can, according to our abilities: As the writer to the Hebrews said, *'let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds'*, (Hebrews 10.24), even during the lockdown.

On a personal note, for the time being I have changed my day off to Fridays – a day when Michael is available. I shall not look at my emails on that day, so excuse 'radio silence' from your Rector on Fridays. Fortunately, all in my household continue well – I sincerely hope and pray that is true for you, too. But we must all look after ourselves in order to serve and love others. I located yesterday [Mr Motivator's video](#) for our current times – it's fun, even for someone as constitutionally averse to gym-based activities as me! You, too, might like to try his not-too-arduous short workout (some of which he says you can do sitting-down): But, there again, you may have your own favourite indoor exercise regime already. Keep at it!

With my love and prayers,
Your Rector,
Maggie.