

Dear All,

We hope you are all well. As promised in our last letter, we would like to share some further information with you about our Church during these unusual times.

Worship

As we mentioned, we commend signing up online to the URC's 'Daily Devotions' for a daily reflection and prayer, along with a Sunday morning Service sent out every Sunday 10am. <https://devotions.urc.org.uk/>

If you cannot sign up by email but would like to receive a copy of this through your door, please let us know and we will try and help.

Also as mentioned, we plan to email out a weekly reflection and prayer which Neil intends to have with you by Saturday evening. This may also include a notice or two, if we have something to share. We hope to have this hand delivered to those who do not have an email account although the person may not be able to call in due to Government guidelines aimed at keeping us as safe and well.

We also notice that yesterday, the BBC has said that it will broadcast a Sunday Morning Service across its local radio stations, with Worship initially being led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. They are also hoping to broadcast on BBC One. So please do check on these programmes if they are of interest to you.

A few folk have noticed a wonderful idea of lighting a candle this coming Sunday at 7pm and we warmly commend it to you all. This idea can be found on the Churches Together in England website but we have attached the details with our letter. At 7pm this Sunday, we are all invited to light a candle in the windows of our homes as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, our source and hope in prayer. The other Town Centre Churches are also taking part. Please note the safety notice and stay safe!

Pastoral Care

In addition to what we shared yesterday about caring and connecting with one another, we would like to collate a list of those among us who are not in one of the vulnerable and at risk groups and who would be willing to be part of a team within our fellowship which could help with delivering letters, devotions and offer any practical help when needed. If you'd be able to help with this, please email Rob and this list of volunteers will then be sent to all of the Deacons.

Finances

During this unusual period of time much of the Church's expenditure will continue of course. Also, we will not be receiving any Letting Income for the foreseeable future and offerings made during the Sunday Services which are an important part of our income, will cease. Many of us already give by Standing Order and perhaps there is an opportunity for those of us who give through our weekly envelope scheme to consider whether we would like to do this directly by Standing Order to Christ Church's Account. Please let John know if you would like to do this and he will offer the necessary help. Alternatively, we can give to our Church by sending a cheque to John's home, say, once a month or by holding on to our offerings until we next gather as a Church again, whichever way suits you best.

The Church's Buildings and Car Park

We have fully secured the Church's Buildings for now. Mike has put up a notice to let people know the buildings have had to close and assuring the community of our love and prayers.

Access to the church – We don't imagine that many of us will need access to the Church but when needed, this will now only be possible by arrangement with Jayne. Jayne is also in the at risk group and so cannot come into close contact with anyone. So please telephone Jayne to let her know when you will come and she can then take off the security and, again, phone Jayne to let her know when you've left the building and she will then put the security back on. For those who hold security keys, we ask that you let Jayne know when you will be coming in and also let her know when you have left.

With our thanks, Mike will check the premises from time to time to ensure we have no gas leaks, dripping taps, etc. and Jayne will use this time to give all our rooms and the Sanctuary a thorough clean.

Car Park - all the 'Block Off' periods with Carflow are now suspended until further notice and so anyone who is not on the White List will receive a penalty notice should they park in our car park. Of course, as mentioned earlier, there will be no lettings and so none of the usual visitors until further notice.

We will write again in due course. May we once again assure you of our love, care and concern, encourage you once again to lean into our loving and faithful God and to pray for one another, for our communities and our world, especially all those in need, throughout this period of time.

With love and best wishes to you and your loved ones.

Every blessing,

Neil, Rob and John

On behalf of all the Christ Church Deacons



**Light a candle of hope:
A national call to prayer**

Presidents of Churches Together in England have issued a call to prayer in the light of the Coronavirus pandemic. This is for all churches and people of prayer to join on Sunday 22nd March, Mothering Sunday.

They write....

This Mothering Sunday, 22nd March, we are calling all churches to a National Day of Prayer and Action. At such a time as this, when so many are fearful and there is great uncertainty, we are reminded of our dependence on our loving Heavenly Father and the future that he holds.

At 7pm this Sunday, light a candle in the windows of your homes as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, our source and hope in prayer.

Whether you are continuing to worship as congregations or not, we have the great privilege and freedom to be able to call upon God, wherever we are, individually and corporately, for healing in our nation. We would pray for all in leadership at this time, making decisions about the containment of the COVID-19 virus, for those working in health and social care, and especially for the most vulnerable, whether elderly or those with underlying health conditions.

There are already stories being told of wonderful acts of kindness across neighbourhoods. Alongside your prayers, take the opportunity to telephone or email someone who is isolated, buy some additional food for your local foodbank, or offer to deliver shopping for an elderly neighbour. We may not be able to touch physically, but we can make connections in so many other ways.

In the meantime, do please attend to all [the government health advice](#) that will be issued, and look out for resources from your specific church governing bodies. At least for those of us in the global North, we do seem to be in unusual times, and wisdom and flexibility about worship gatherings are a key part of our Christian discipleship during this period.

We note that this call to prayer and action comes on Mothering Sunday: a time of thankfulness, remembering especially mothers who have served us, often in very costly ways. It is also a very mixed day for many. For some the remembrance is painful, and for others Mothering Sunday is a reminder of disappointment or loss. In many ways, this period under the shadow of the coronavirus will be prompting similarly diverse reactions and so it seems especially appropriate that the call to prayer is made this Sunday. At this time of uncertainty join in with the National Day of Prayer and Action, lighting a candle of hope*.

“Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you” 1 Peter 5:7

***Safety note** - please take all necessary fire precautions when using a lit candle. Ensure you remain with the lit candle at all times, and do not leave it to burn if you leave the room. Ensure there are no fabrics or materials such as curtains near the candle. If you are able to use a small electric ‘candle’ instead, that will be safe to leave unattended.