

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Things have changed beyond anything we could have imagined when we met in church on the 15th March. Then, we were looking at our identity. And how, as followers of Christ, we can live differently. It is apparent that things have changed - and church has changed too.

We have to worship, pray and think differently. We are no longer able to go to church to receive. But maybe this is a good thing, and out of this we can learn to turn from receiving and gathering to giving and scattering...

Scattering love, hope, joy and most of all the good news of the gospel of Christ. As I explained we can do this in many ways. The limits imposed on our movements mean that we have the opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ to our nearest and dearest, who are the ones we often take most for granted. Modelling love, patience, grace, peace, kindness, selflessness, self-control and gratitude.

It is, I know, easy to trot out these words. It's much harder to actually do these things especially under the pressure of cooped up children, worries about elderly relatives, difficulties with finances, and uncertainties about job security. But with the power of the Holy Spirit we can do all things through Christ. (Col 4:13).

Going forward. As you know the church is completely closed. I am not even able to go in to pray or for the service of Holy Communion on Sundays. I have sent out a booklet containing some resources to all on the electoral roll - those outside the IG3 area should receive it by post this week.

We are piloting an online fellowship tomorrow evening 25th March via Skype. There will be a time of fellowship and a brief bible study led by Sam at 7:30 pm. We shall see how this runs. There is now a Prayer WhatsApp Group where we can share prayer requests.

We are rather assuming that things will carry on as normal online, but I suspect that there may be a reduction in the quality of online services, given the volume of traffic, and we must be prepared for all eventualities. In the run up to Easter, where possible, we will publicise online services. Each Sunday from this Sunday 29th March and on the forthcoming Palm Sunday 5th April, the Church of England will offer a service broadcast online via social media as well as some audio prayer resources. We will see what happens during Holy Week, including Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. I shall live-stream a service on Easter Day from home and I plan record and publish reflections and a time of prayer. We will let you know via the website and Facebook when this happens. For the foreseeable future, the Church of England plans to maintain its online Sunday services offering.

Over the next couple of weeks, I shall be posting things on the Church website and Facebook page. I would encourage you to visit them. I pray that, in the spirit of Christian love and humility, we maintain online etiquette as we do so. And that we exercise wisdom and discernment especially when posting on FB and the church-related WhatsApp Groups. With plenty of unexpected time on our hands, it is easy to spend a lot of time on social media and there are loads of things swirling around on social media not all of which are helpful or edifying. As mature Christians we should remember the words of Christ in Matthew 7:21-23.

This might be a good time to try and follow a bible reading programme. You can follow "Bible in one year" or find one on the *You Version Bible App*.

There shall be plenty more to say over the coming weeks so I shall stop here. If you are able to share the highlights of what I have said here with those who do not have online access, please do so.

Please stay safe and do contact me if need be. It is best to contact me by email or text. I am continuing in all my various other roles and anticipate that will be a couple of weeks before things settle down so I would value your patience. Be reassured of my constant prayers for your protection and safety. And remember that no matter what happens or how things change one thing remind the same - Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Heb: 13:8).

Blessings

Ade