

Rector's update 03 – Church without a church

(18th March 2020)

Dear All,

Recently a minister described these times as being like walking through a wardrobe, but instead of entering the lovely land of Narnia, we had entered the horrible world of 'Covid-ia'. Worse still the door is closed behind us and, and to use the old words of the King James Bible, we find ourselves 'strangers in a strange land' (Exodus 2:22). The landscape is frightening, but we can perhaps take some comfort that people of faith have lived through extreme times before; whether through the plague, cholera, revolution or war; and have kept or even deepened their faith.

The churchless church

Perhaps the most significant and dramatic thing for us this week is the announcement that all services are to stop until further notice. Could we have imagined this even a few weeks ago?

Again reflecting on church history, there have been many times when a major change during troubled times has laid the foundations for the church to later flourish. When so much is uncertain, we will have many opportunities to share our sure hope and faith. Indeed, as our Archbishops recently said:

"... far from having to 'shut up shop', the Church of England must face the challenge by becoming a radically different kind of church rooted in prayer and serving others" ... "This is a defining moment for the Church of England. Are we truly a church for all, or just the church for ourselves? We urge you sisters and brothers to become a different sort of church in these coming months: hopeful and rooted in the offering of prayer and praise and overflowing in service to the world."

(Note: please assume that any other church-related meetings are either cancelled or postponed. However, weddings and funerals will continue to be held, as will the Connect toddler group meeting at Melford Country Park on Mondays at 9.00am.)

Being community

I will be saying more in due course about various ways we can look out and pray for our neighbours, much as I am aware many have already been doing just that. For your information, I have been in liaison with Parish Council members from Alpheton, Long Melford, and Shimpling, and have offered the church's support. Most households will be receiving a leaflet from their Parish Councils shortly if you have not already done so. I have also put out a video encouraging Calm, Consideration, and Community (3 C's) on Facebook. www.facebook.com/1768795803366733/videos/194603075296997/.

The 10.30am Services will be livestreamed (Mothering Sunday)

Though most services are cancelled, we will be livestreaming the 10.30am service on Sunday. Again who would have thought we would be doing that a few weeks ago!? I encourage all of you to watch this if you can to continue our sense of being in communion together. Please see the directions on the following page on how to do this. This Sunday we will celebrate Mothering Sunday – please increase our sense of togetherness by forwarding me any message to mothers, or messages of thanks to share about our Mothers ... I will try to read these out.

Candle in your window – A national call to prayer this Sunday

A National Day of Prayer and Action has been announced by the presidents of Churches Together in England, re. the Coronavirus epidemic, for this Sunday 22nd March.

"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. Therefore, at 7pm (GMT) 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."

Wherever you are in the world, we invite you to join with us in prayer to see an end to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Self-isolation

It has been a rather busy week for me, driving many 100's miles to collect kids, and configuring our house so that I can protect those at high risk whilst maximising my ability to serve (I'm currently living in the caravan!). However I know that many are starting to face time alone and have time to fill (not kill). If that is you, I pray that you are beginning to find a structure to your day, you will stay connected, and that you will make the most of this opportunity to deepen your relationship with the Lord. One very simple start to the day might be by tuning in to morning prayer with our Bishops on weekdays at 8.30am at www.facebook.com/BishopsCofEsuffolk/.

Philippians 4:6-7 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.



Rev'd Matthew Lawson, Rector of Alpheton, Long Melford, and Shimpling

Please turn over for Livestreaming instructions

*Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Livestreaming

We are aiming to livestream all 10.30am services so you are able to participate at home:

1. Go to the Melford Church website:
www.longmelfordchurch.com
2. Scroll down to the Facebook box on the front page.
3. Click on the words Holy Trinity Church at the top of this box.
4. Once in our Facebook page scroll down a bit to see the service.

