



ST ANDREW'S, CHESTERTON

A thriving, open and welcoming church community for all ages

www.standrews-chesterton.org.uk

17 March 2020

Dear friends

We live in extraordinary times and that requires extraordinary responses, not least in that loving our neighbour now requires us to keep our physical distance from them. For the most vulnerable that means more or less staying at home (to protect both ourselves and the strained resources of the healthcare system); for children and teachers that means, for the time being, continuing in school for the sake of keeping essential people at work; for the rest of us it means avoiding all unnecessary physical social interaction.

Today our archbishops have issued advice that all public services in churches should discontinue (except for funerals and weddings); there will similarly be no small group meetings.

But this does not mean that the Church is closing down – far from it.

First of all, the church building will still be open in the daytime. There will be no public services but people are welcome to visit and pray. We will be taking the obvious precautions in terms of cleaning, and advise keeping social distance, but we are not being told to close our buildings – in fact we have been encouraged to keep them open.

Secondly, we will still hope to hold services for larger numbers (10am on Sundays) and worship/prayer/study/fellowship for smaller groups. They will simply be happening virtually and online. We will be making clear how you can join in. Technological wizards are even as I speak setting up and testing the technology (and making sure some of us can operate it!) to enable this to happen. For the smaller groups you won't need to have a computer but will be able to join by ringing in from your telephone.

Thirdly, your clergy now have remarkably empty diaries and, though mostly we will not be seeing people face-to-face, we do have telephones and would be delighted to hear from you for whatever reason. My telephone number is 01223 303469 (or email vicar@standrews-chesterton.org and one of us will get back to you). And if ever it will help you for us to be physically present, we will be there if allowed.

Fourthly, the church office will remain open daily, 10am to 2pm, as long as Rachel or another member of staff is well (01223 306150).

Fifthly, a number of people have kindly offered their services to help others in need by delivering food, medicine or in other ways. The best way to help is for all of us to be in touch with our own neighbours and support them as we are able. But there may be those who feel isolated and do not know who to turn to. We would be very happy to help broker voluntary help– offers and requests should go to the church/hall office (admin@standrews-chesterton.org).

From the Reverend Canon Nicholas Moir, *Vicar*
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Telephone: (01223) 303469 Email: vicar@standrews-chesterton.org

We will keep in touch with you by sending out updates by email once a week (or more if needed), by frequent postings on the church website (www.standrews-chesterton.org) and on a new St Andrew's Facebook page (which we hope to launch in the next couple of days). We will keep in phone contact with those who aren't online but also ask others to cascade information as appropriate.

The archbishops – together with other church leaders – have called for a national day of prayer on Sunday, including an invitation to light a candle of hope at 7pm that day, a reminder that 'the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it' (John 1.5).

I am not afraid, and if ever I wobble I remind myself that 'the true light, which enlightens everyone' came in to the world' (John 1.9). I find that the practice of prayer – of gazing at the light – dispels the darkness, as does seeing the light of goodness and kindness in others, including you, dear friends.

The Lord protect and keep us in these coming days from all the 'fears and phantoms of the night'.

Grace and peace to you all

Nick