

20th March 2020

Dear friends

We seem to be entering uncharted territory very quickly, and many will be nervous and afraid.

In the midst of the crisis, it has been so encouraging to see people rallying round to offer help to those in need. On Wednesday, someone contacted me out of the blue to donate £500 to help children from the very lowest income backgrounds who will be affected by the lack of free school meals as St Peter's school closes. At the end of a long and emotional day, their act of generosity brought tears to my eyes.

Over the last few days, as all physical church meetings and worship have been suspended, we have been working hard to become a virtual church community, to support all who are self-isolating or vulnerable. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all.

The St Peter's Church YouTube channel is now up and running, with five different posts so far (from Charles, Heike, and Steve the Virger), and more to come. We'll be uploading a short form of Sunday Worship tomorrow, with prayers, readings and a talk for Mothering Sunday, which you can watch at home.

We're also inviting contributions from the congregation, to let us know how you are getting on, give us some much needed entertainment, or an activity to do. It's easy to record on your computer or phone nowadays, and it is a great encouragement to the rest of us (especially those in isolation) to see familiar faces. St Peter's church choir are already at work on some kind of joint online singing venture (?) which we look forward to!

We've been re-energising the church Facebook page as well, as a convenient way to post news and information as quickly as possible. You can link both to the YouTube channel and the Facebook page through the church website, which is being regularly updated.

To connect with those who live alone and aren't online, we've ordered 2000 postcards with a message from the church and the offer of help, which we want to deliver throughout the parish. So we'll need volunteers next week to distribute them!

Going forward, we want to communicate with as many as possible in the church using WhatsApp (which allows group text conversations), and Zoom (which enables online group meetings with video). If you haven't used either, do have a look at them (and ask if you need help). Technology permitting, we'll try to start experimenting with some online meetings (coffee mornings? book groups? midday prayer?) via Zoom next week.

For those who are isolated and don't do computers, we want to make sure there are regular phone calls and pastoral support. Do let us know if you could help with this, or if you know of anyone who could particularly benefit.

On a practical level, the parish office is now closed, and the office phone is therefore no longer checked regularly, but the email address remains the same, and you can call or leave messages for Charles directly on 07979093418.

Sunday Worship will be available on YouTube via the link on the website, but you'll be able to watch it at your leisure! So this week, you can have lie-in on Sunday, and still make it to church on time! It's the first time we've ever done it, so please keep feedback and comments coming!

Love and blessings to you all,

Charles

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LETTER FROM THE CHURCH WARDENS

Dear fellow parishioners,

We are very conscious of the real difficulties we are all facing, in one way or another, as a result of the COVID-19 virus. In particular we will not be able to have our normal Sunday services at St Peter's. Charles is doing a great job in finding other ways for us to communicate with each other.

As Church Wardens and Treasurer, we are also conscious of the need to minimise the financial hit to our church. The Sunday collections - yellow envelopes, other cash, and coffee money - are an important element in our budget, usually a few hundred pounds each week.

We would therefore be grateful if those parishioners who usually donate in this way would consider setting up direct debit instead, for the amount they usually give in cash or yellow envelopes. The form is quite simple and we have put it onto the parish website to make it easier to access.

If you would rather not set up a direct debit, we wonder whether you would consider putting aside each week the sum you would normally give, with a view to giving a lump sum when things return to normal. If you would like to do that, please let one of us or Lucy the administrator know, and we could send you some yellow envelopes.

We apologise for introducing money matters when there are so many other real problems to deal with. But we hope you will share our concern to keep our income going as far as possible during this difficult period.

Best wishes and many thanks,

Jane Fryer (Warden)

Richard Woods (Warden)

NOTICES

RIP. We received sad news this week of the death of Barbara Hales, a stalwart member of the congregation for many years, who had been living at St Mary's Convent in recent years. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

PCC MEMBERS & DEANERY SYNOD. There are several vacancies coming up this April; do speak to Charles or the church wardens if you might be interested in standing.

ELECTORAL ROLL REVISION. To join the church membership list, fill in the form at the back of church (or online at <https://stpetersw6.org/about/join-stpeters-electoral-roll/>), by April 12th.