



The Benefice of Ross
with Walford
and
Brampton
Abbotts

Newsletter

22nd March 2020
Mothering Sunday

*We offer a warm welcome to
everyone at our services today.*

rawchurch.org.uk



From the Rector

Dear friends

It has been a deeply challenging and disturbing week. Last Sunday it was “business as usual” with some restrictions due to the coronavirus, but following the Prime Minister’s briefing on Monday, things moved quickly and dramatically. People started to self-isolate, international borders closed, non-essential travel was discouraged, any activity in our lives that involved gathering with others was cancelled or forced online, and on Friday schools across England closed indefinitely. In this highly dynamic and evolving situation plans and thinking become obsolete very quickly – so I am aware that what I write here may be very dated by the time you read it.

Clearly our first concern must be to protect ourselves and others from the COVID-19 virus, and I thus encourage you to adhere to the advice given by relevant authorities. While this might at times seem excessive, we would not want to put others, especially the most vulnerable, at risk from the virus.

As Christians, the dual commandments to love God and love our neighbour will direct how we live through this difficult time. One of the more startling developments this week has been the decision by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to suspend all public worship in the Church of England until the coronavirus has run its course. The clergy can and will continue to offer prayer on behalf of and for communities, but these times of prayer will not be open to the public. We will put some of these services online and details of such services will follow. Parishioners are encouraged to develop a routine of prayer in their own homes, and we will send such resources to help and inspire you. Consider watching church services on television or online, or listening to hymns and worship, or reading a bible or devotional text – these are all ways in which you can feed your soul.

The Archbishops have called for a National Day of Prayer and Action on Mothering Sunday (22nd March). They have asked all to light a candle at 7 pm and put it in our

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The Rev’d Canon Chris Blanchard | 01989 762368 | frchris2@icloud.com (Sun - Wed)

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windows, and to be a good neighbour by ringing someone who is isolated and vulnerable, or buying an extra item and donating it to a food bank or in any other way blessing people.

St Mary's Church in Ross, and St Michael's Church in Walford will remain open every day for anyone who would like to pray, light candles, or simply spend a few moments in quiet thought. Commonly touched surfaces in the churches are regularly cleaned for your safety.

In the Archbishops' words we will need to become a "different sort of church" in the face of the coronavirus crisis - a church dedicated to prayer and the service of others. I would encourage anyone who is self-isolating or needs practical assistance to contact Lou in the Benefice Office. We are compiling a list of people that we will maintain regular contact with, and will help in any way we can. As a benefice we are making ourselves available to partner with civic and other agencies that are working to provide assistance to our communities, but please let me know if there is a need that you know of that we might be able to assist with.

At St Mary's, we felt God calling us to be an Inclusive, Intergenerational Church marked by Faith, Hope, and Love following our Parish Vision Day. I dare say that this vision must now be launched and enacted, and that all our parishes should do everything they can in this crisis to promote Christian faith, hope and love in their communities.

None of us have faced a crisis quite like

this, and in such a fast-changing scenario we are all struggling to adapt and move forward well. I would like to complement and thank the people in our parishes who have risen to the challenge this week and are helping us to do church differently.

It feels very sad to be forced apart in the way we are. But let us remember that we are connected by something far more profound than broadband at this time: we are connected by our baptism in Christ, we are connected by his Holy Spirit, we have one Heavenly Father. We are a spiritual family who during this crisis will be united and motivated by our faith, our hope and our love.

Yours in love and prayer

Sean

Today's Collect

God of compassion,
whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary,
shared the life of a home in Nazareth,
and on the cross drew the whole human
family to himself:
strengthen us in our daily living
that in joy and in sorrow
we may know the power of your presence
to bind together and to heal;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

We pray for those who are ill

Mary Hope

We remember those who have died

Benjamin James, John Williams, Daryl
Jenkins, Keith Haile, Margaret Nelson &
Doreen Clark

Today's Reading

Gospel Reading John 19.25b-27

²⁵And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

This Week and Beyond

St Mary's and St Michaels, Walford - will be open from 9am-5pm for private prayer. We welcome and encourage people to come into the church. We are taking precautions by sanitising common surface twice a day for your safety.

Alpha - Are you someone who has wondered what Alpha is all about? Would you like to explore questions of faith with others? Do you want to deepen or grow in your faith? The Alpha course aims to do just that by offering a shared meal, DVD and then discussion groups. Over 24 million people have tried Alpha in over 100 countries. Alpha 3 will be starting after Easter on the evening of Wednesday May 6th and will run for 8 weeks with an Away Day on June 20th. If you have already completed Alpha, who could you now invite or encourage to join us? If you would like to sign up as a guest, a helper or an Alpha chef please let Lou know. Christine

Hassocks - It has become clear over the last year that hardly any members of the congregation at St Mary's wish to use the hassocks, either to kneel on or to put their feet on. We shall retain the few hassocks now in the church, but over the coming weeks we shall have to clear a large number from south porch. Many of these were made by members of the congregation, and we would like to ensure that the makers or their families have a chance to take them back. The hassocks will shortly be placed in St Mary's for people to search through. Meanwhile please alert anyone who might be interested. Janet Cooper

Due to the current advice about Corona virus, both the Flower Festival at St Mary's and the Pudding and Quiz evening, will be cancelled. Margaret Willis

Services

All public worship of the Church of England has been suspended in line with the request of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York until further notice. Please let us know if you would details of our online services.