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Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020



Passion Sunday

Dear Friends

Well it's been another unusual week! I hope you are enjoying receiving your regular church news via email or through your door. Thank you to everyone who has been so diligent in collecting data to enable this to happen efficiently. And a huge thank you to those responsible for distribution, online and on foot.

I am sure you will be up to date with the news that all our churches are now closed for the foreseeable future. They cannot be used for worship or prayer at all, including by clergy. This is hard for all of us, but it is also encouraging us to think about church in new and creative ways and this will have lasting benefits.

A few pieces of practical news for you.

Our DCCs and PCCs are beginning to meet online using free video conferencing facilities. Thanks to a change in church law it is also now possible for church committees to make decisions by email. This will be a great help over the weeks to come.

Our telephone cascade/telephone trees are working well. Please do keep in regular contact with anyone you have been asked to call from time to time. This is especially important if you are in contact with someone who is not on email as we may need to stop the delivery of newsletters by hand and the cost of postage is considerable. Please be ready to read letters like this over the phone so that everyone feels informed and involved.

The financial impact of the virus on the church is a continuing concern. A huge thank you to those who have sent in donations or increased your giving. A closed church is not a free church – if you can give more please do, and please make sure you set aside a little each week for the church even though we cannot worship together.

I am considering how we might distribute Palm Crosses next week. I will bless these at home in the vicarage before making them available. Palm Crosses will have particular significance this year as a sign of our belonging to Christ and to one another. Even if we have stopped newsletter deliveries, perhaps we can make an exception for a cross! More on that later.

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Next week I will write about Holy Week and how you can participate in this most important of weeks in the church calendar. You will be able to join others at the same time every day for prayer and reflection – apart yes, but together as part of the Body of Christ. It won't be the same, it won't be what was planned, but I have a feeling it will help us to connect with that first Holy Week even more than usual.

This letter was written mid-week on the feast of the Annunciation – precisely nine months before Christmas Day. The feast celebrates Mary's 'Yes!!' to God as she accepts with humility and trust the role destined for her. May we echo Mary's response to God as we – faced with uncertainty and humbled by our mortality in the face of COVID-19 – turn to God for strength, wisdom and courage for the unknown days ahead.

With continuing love and prayers,

David Ford, Rector

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