

**St Mary’s : Holy Trinity : St Peter’s**

Feast of St Cuthbert, 20th March 2020

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

**Coronavirus COVID – 19 Pandemic - latest update**

I am sure you will have been reading the papers and watching the news and keeping up with the British Government’s daily updates on strategy and advice. In response to its latest strategic guidance made on Tuesday both archbishops (Justin Welby and John Sentamu) issued a statement advising us that from this week all public worship be suspended. Only funerals and weddings can take place but under certain strict conditions (as verified today with the Diocesan Registrar):

1. A maximum of 5 people may attend a wedding: bride and groom, the priest and two witnesses.
2. The congregation at a funeral must not exceed 9 people inclusive of the priest and the funeral director.

Everyone over 70 or with underlying health conditions is being asked to remain home-based as far as practicable and therefore should not be attending such services. Anyone attending should keep 2 metres (6 feet) apart. Everyone needs to keep to the hygiene advice (20 second of hand wash/sanitising hands with a 70%+ alcohol gel). Anyone with an infection with the following symptoms: fever/new persistent cough needs to self-isolate for 7 days. If there are other family members sharing the same household this need to be extended to 14 days.

Whilst the clergy will be saying prayers in church during the week they, with the churchwardens, feel that for reasons of safeguarding that Calne and Blackland churches (St Mary, Holy Trinity, St Peter) should remain closed. Likewise Church House will remain closed. On Tuesday and Friday afternoons (12 noon- 4.00pm) it will be possible for people who are in need of food to access the food bank. They should ring first if possible (01249/816522) so food parcels can be got ready and handed to people outside on Church Path.

As Her Majesty, the Queen, put it in her message to the nation we are “entering a period of great concern and uncertainty”. As Christians we need to keep faith in the God of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the source of our strength and hope.

Whilst there are many things that we are concerned and anxious about at this time there are things that we can be thankful for …

* For the skill and dedication of all who serve in our National Health service
* For the expertise of our scientific community seeking for treatments and vaccines to fight the virus
* For all the carers who look after vulnerable members of our community whether they are in their own homes or in residential care
* For the love and care of our friends and family
* For those who have donated to the Calne foodbank
* For all who have offered their services across the community to shop and otherwise help their neighbours *(if you know of anyone in particular need please do get in touch so we can organise help)*
* For those who have left messages to say they will be praying regularly for others especially the many people in our society who are either seriously ill or who are under all kinds of pressure

Also, as we continue to use the Church of England booklets #Live Lent-Care for God’s creation maybe we should note that the unintended consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic is a reduction in global levels of pollution and C02 emissions. We are being reminded daily how we all need to live our lives paradoxically both more carefully in relation to the environment and more generously in relation to each other.

Whilst we are unable to share the same space for worship and prayer at the moment it is our praying that also connects us to each other. Whenever we pray, alone or with others, we always pray as members of the Body of Christ.

This coming Sunday is the fourth Sunday of Lent, commonly known as ‘Mothering Sunday’. It is a Sunday when we celebrate our belonging one to another as part of ‘Mother Church’. Whilst we can’t all get to a church, we can all pray as ‘Church’. Archbishop Justin has invited us to join him as he leads worship on 22nd March. This service of morning worship will be broadcast at 8.00am on BBC local radio stations. (There is also a previously planned broadcast at 8.10 on R4 on our Lenten theme “Care for Creation” with Ruth Valerio as preacher). Also this coming Sunday has been designated as a national day of prayer and action by church leaders from across the nation who have stated : *“Whether you are continuing to worship as congregations or not, we have the great privilege and freedom to be able to call upon God, wherever we are, individually and corporately, for healing in our nation.”* People are asked to light a candle in their window at 7 p.m. on Sunday *“as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ”.*

Today (20th March) is the Feast Day of St Cuthbert ([c.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circa) 634 – 20 March 687). He is an Anglo-Saxon saint of the early Northumbrian church. He began life as a shepherd but experienced a profound religious experience as a young boy. He went on to become a monk and a bishop. His life was bound up with the monasteries of Melrose and Lindisfarne and he ended his life as a hermit on a small Farne island. The psalm set for today is the twenty-third psalm. It is a very appropriate psalm both for his feast and for our current crisis.

In love and prayer,

***Bob Kenway***

***Psalm 23***

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. You prepare a table before me
   He makes me lie down in green pastures; in the presence of my enemies he leads me beside still waters; you anoint my head with oil;

 he restores my soul. my cup overflows.
He leads me in right paths Surely goodness and mercy shall

for his name’s sake. follow me all the days of my life,

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
   I fear no evil; my whole life long.
for you are with me;
   your rod and your staff— ***Prayer for use during Coronavirus crisis***
   they comfort me. Keep us, good Lord

 under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious be with those who care for the sick, that we may find comfort knowing
 that nothing can separate us from your love

 In Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

If you would like to find out more about what the Church of England says about the Covid-19 pandemic then please visit

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>