



Tuesday 3 November 2020

Dear brothers and sisters,

You will all have seen and heard that we are entering a second national lockdown this Bonfire Night, which includes the closing of churches for public worship for the month. We, and so many others, will feel like our well-laid plans have gone up in flames. My colleagues and I are so grateful to the key people who have made our churches COVID-secure since June and for everyone's compliance and co-operation, so this does come as a blow. This feeling will be shared by many whose businesses and livelihoods are imperilled yet further.

But equally we pray for the whole coronavirus situation: for our NHS; for all who have the disease or are at risk of contracting it; for those who have died and for those who mourn; for our government and their advisers; that this collective sacrificial lockdown will help to turn the tide, by God's grace.

From this Remembrance Sunday, then, we will revert to a recorded service on the Merton Priory Parish YouTube channel. We hope to record it early enough, so that it is available for the weekend and you can engage with it at a time that works for you. Furthermore, since we recently acquired a Team Zoom account, we hope to offer a social time on Zoom for any who wish to join that (virtual coffee after church?!). Details of all of this will appear on the websites and e-notices.

What is importantly different this time round, however, is that churches can remain open for private prayer and vital community or educational use. Therefore, I am pleased to say (for instance) that Christ Church continues to provide hospitality for the Flourish Nursery, while Holy Trinity provides space for Care for Calais to store necessary goods for asylum seekers who are living locally.

And these are our current times when the churches are open for prayer:

Monday Holy Trinity 3.00pm-6.00pm

Tuesday St John's 8.00am-9.00am

Wednesday Christ Church 5.00pm-7.00pm

Thursday Holy Trinity 11.00am-2.00pm

Saturday Christ Church 9.00am-10.00am

Do pop in when you feel like it and also if you could now give just an hour a week to ensure we can be open at this especially crucial time, please get in touch.

We hope that you will all be keeping in touch with each other for friendship and practical help and are grateful to those church members who have been keeping in regular contact with those who otherwise might be isolated or vulnerable. On top of this, do please get in touch with any of the three of us if you need something or want to talk; we are always here for you.

Let us pray that we - and our community and nation - will get through this month and be able to worship and be together in December for Advent and Christmas.

We also commend to you the accompanying pastoral letters from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York with the Bishop of London, as well as from our own Bishop of Southwark. The Archbishops make a particular appeal for this month to be dedicated to prayer and resources will be forthcoming.

Echoing the start of Hebrews 12, we can be comforted by the great cloud of witnesses who surround us and while we may not be up to running the race set before us, we can nevertheless pray for the perseverance to be God's people of hope for our generation.

May God give you grace to follow his saints in faith and hope and love,

with love and prayers,

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