

Dear Friends,

This week, Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby and Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu have called for all Church of England churches to suspend public worship to help stem the spread of Coronavirus. Church services have therefore sadly been cancelled in our Benefice and throughout the Diocese.

This Sunday evening at 7pm, on Mothering Sunday, we have been asked to join **A NATIONAL CALL TO PRAYER** in our own homes. I encourage you to **light a candle of Hope at 7pm** and spend some time in prayer for our fragile world in this time of crisis. If you don't have a candle, then sit by a lamp in your home.



This a time of testing and trial at every level of society for individuals, commerce, schools, supermarkets, NHS, Armed Forces and Emergency Services and their Chaplains, and our Nursing Homes. Our prayers are needed more than ever. For all our society, we have the power of our faith to pray and share the love and hope of Christ. Even in self-isolation, we can yet sit in our homes and become a powerful and focussed centre of prayer there - for our communities, our country and our world.



Our parish churches will remain open as the spiritual hub of our community so that you can use it as a focus for a walk through the village to stretch your legs and enjoy a tranquil space for meditation and prayer. There are spiritual resources available for you to read and a prayer board, should you wish us to pray for you or a loved one.

You will also find helpful links to streamed services, daily prayer patterns and other spiritual resources on The Downs Benefice website at: <http://downsbefice.org/>

Each parish is also developing community projects to support any of you who has made the decision to self-isolate, either to stay well or to recover from the virus. Please look out for a leaflet to come through your door! If you are able and willing to volunteer to help others, please do so.



We all need to look out for each other – it is a joy to think that our love of God and neighbour will be expressed in new ways, responding to the challenge of the coronavirus, and focusing on our closest and most vulnerable neighbours as we work in Jesus' love to deepen and strengthen the bonds of friendship and outreach across our treasured community.

'It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.'

Deuteronomy 31:8

Our Benefice Office remains open 9-5, Monday to Friday. Caroline also has to remain safe, so I have asked her not to invite people into the office. However, she can be contacted on (01962) 880845 and by email at: office@downsbefice.org.uk

God willing, I am also here to serve our Benefice communities in any way I can. Be assured of my continuing prayers for you all,

With every blessing,

Jax

Revd Jax Machin, Rector of The Downs Benefice 07761 055228

'Be still and know that I am God' Psalm 46: 10