

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

25/3/20

I'm writing again to let you know what the current situation is at Christ Church and St Mary's, and to let you know about what we have put in place to support people in the church family, and beyond.

Both Churches are fully closed for the coming weeks. The only exception to this is the food bank, which is an essential service and in High demand.

We are putting three initiatives in place to support peoples practical, and spiritual needs...

1) "Phone a friend" – we have started to gather a list of the people involved in the churches, and have a team of people who will ring once a week to see how people are doing, encourage them and offer to pray with them. (We know that people will be contacting each other anyway, but we want to make sure that no-one is missed!).

2) "Prayer network" – we have set up a group of people who will pray for any prayer requests received. This will be confidential. If you have a prayer request for yourself, or someone else, you can contact one of the members, and they will email the request out to the team.

3) "Sundays online @9" – Each Sunday there will be a DIY church service on the website, with links to readings, prayer sheets, Hymns/worship songs, and a reflection on the passage. We're encouraging the Christ Church community to use it at 9am on Sunday and the St Mary's one at 11am. So that we can worship together as one body, even if we are apart. (If you can't do it at these times, you can do it any time).

There will also be other links available on the website to online services, and other resources.

Serving the wider community

- The foodbank will continue to open as long as it is appropriate to do so, out of the porch at St Mary's on a Monday between 11-12am. Donations are very much needed of food and money – please see the <https://tamesidesouthlongdendale.foodbank.org.uk/> for more information.
- There are local initiatives in both villages to offer/request support for those who are unable to get out and shop, get medicines etc – please do support and pray for these. We are working with them and the council.
- Please continue to keep an eye on anyone you know who might be struggling, give them a ring and have a chat – isolation is one of the biggest challenges that people will face. Why not ask if people would like you to pray for/with them before you say goodbye? Email Bruce or Stephen for some verses and prayers that you might use.
- Silver Cord (the befriending service we support from Hope Community church in Mottram), has moved to phoning people. They are expecting an increase in the need for their service, with more people isolated, more people will need to hear a friendly voice. I have attached on the bottom of this email some information, if you are able to help please
- I have made myself available to work for more days at the Christie if needed, so may be around less over the coming weeks, but feel free to try to ring if you need to, all of the other usual people are only a phone call away.

Some words of encouragement...

I watched this talk by Nicky Gumble (Who wrote the Alpha Course) on YouTube, it was recorded 10 days ago, and a lot has changed since then, but his main points are still valid – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1QemxVgZ1U>.

We need to be wise and follow government advice, we are called to pray (let's say the Lord's Prayer every time we wash our hands). We need to make sure that we don't sink into despair by watching too much news! Let's fill our lives with joy instead of despair. 😊

We are a people of hope & Joy – Christians have celebrated the love of God and the Good news of Jesus, especially at Easter in the most difficult of circumstances – in concentration camps, in prison cells, in the depths of grief – Yet we know that one day Jesus will restore all things, and in the meantime he walks with us in everything life throws at us. I am finding ***Romans chapter 8*** very helpful at the moment, why not read it all? I have copied some of it below, be encouraged – whatever is happening nothing can separate us from God's love.

Every Blessing, Bruce

Romans 8 (NIV)

¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.